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ABSTRACT

Between July 1974 and July 1975, an overall review and appraisal was conducted to evaluate the functions, administration, operation, and services of Canada's Northland School Division Number 61 (a special division created in 1960 under the Northland School Division Act to improve educational services to the outlying, chiefly northern communities in Alberta composed principally of American Indian and Metis peoples). The study design included a three-member team and: visits to all Northland Schools (N=30); meetings with all school staff; public meetings held in each Northland Community; written briefs submitted by people outside the Northland Division; sub-studies (N=4); consultations with representative advisory groups; visits to other northern school jurisdictions; and extensive consultations with the trustees. Major findings were: (1) the academic achievement of students in Northland was considerably below the provincial norm; (2) the transiency and generally poor qualifications of Northland teachers had contributed to poor achievement in the schools; (3) the governing and administrative procedures in Northland needed to be revised to permit a greater degree of local involvement and self-direction. One hundred specific recommendations were made re: governance; curriculum; pupils and services; high school services; teaching staff; supervisory staff; school buildings and grounds; teachers' residences; maintenance; libraries, supplies, and equipment; business and finance; etc. (JC)

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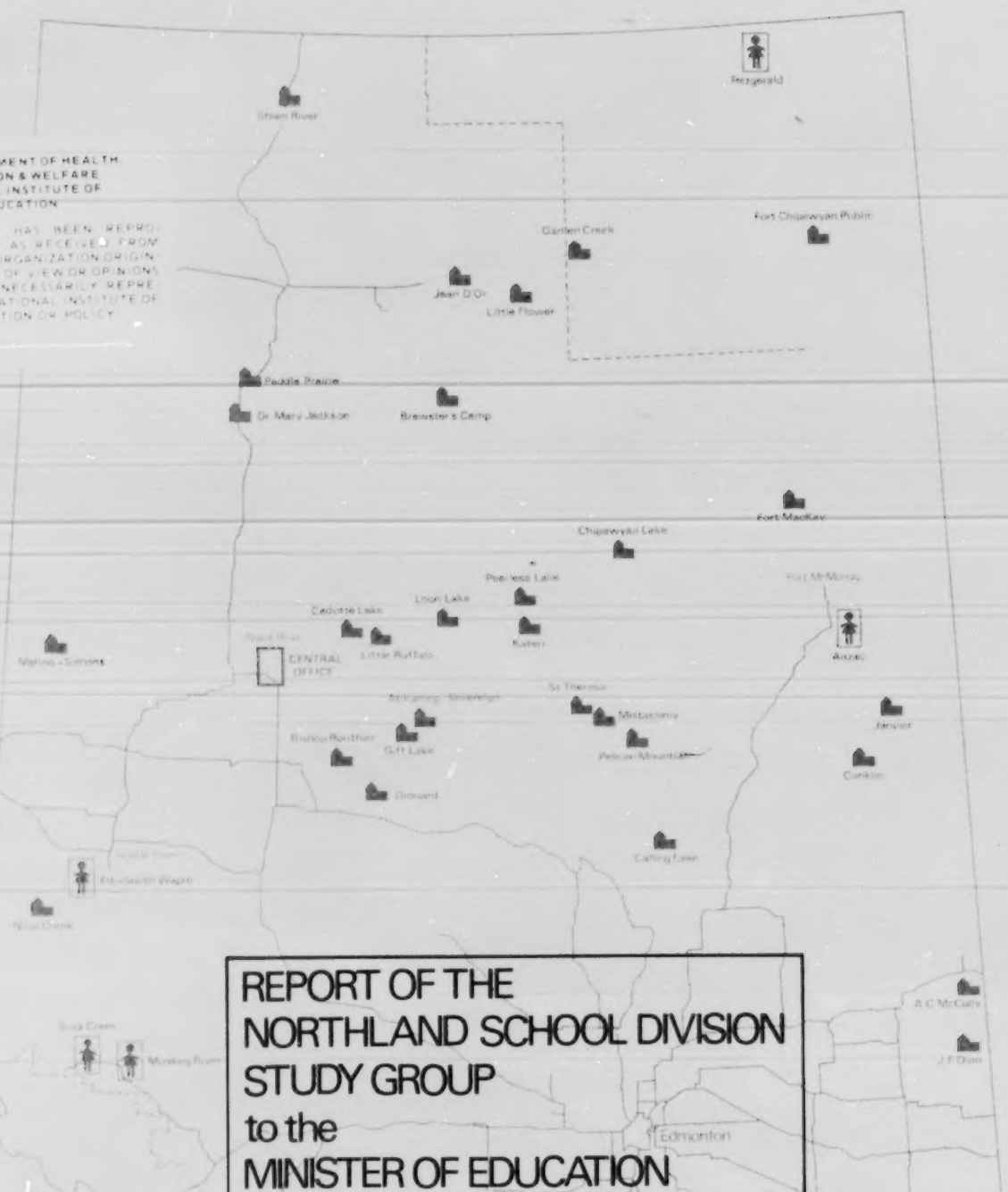


# REPORT OF THE NORTHLAND SCHOOL DIVISION STUDY GROUP to the MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Alberta

JULY 1975 NORTHLAND STUDY GROUP

RC009709

SUMMARY REPORT FORM - PLANNING AND RESEARCH BRANCH

PROJECT TITLE: Northland School Division Study Group

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Dr. W.H. Swift, Chairman

WHERE CARRIED OUT: Edmonton and Northern Alberta

STARTING DATE: July, 1974 DATE OF COMPLETION: July, 1975

AMOUNT OF FINANCING FROM DEPT. OF EDUCATION: No formal approved budget, Chairman on daily honorarium.

OTHER FINANCING (If Applicable): Other two members of the Study Group seconded from regular civic service positions.

PROBLEM AREAS EXAMINED (Purpose of Project):

Generally to study and conduct an overally review and appraisal of the functions, administration, operation, and services of the Northland School Division No. 61.

DESIGN OF THE PROJECT (Method):

1. Visits were made to all Northland Schools.
2. Meetings were held with all school staff.
3. Public meeting held in each Northland Community.
4. Briefs and submissions were received.
5. Several sub-studies were received.
6. Extensive consultations were held with trustess.
7. Visits were made to other northern school jurisdictions.
8. Consultations were held with representative advisory groups.

MAJOR FINDINGS OR OUTCOMES:

1. Academic achievement of students in Northland is considerabley below the provincial norms.
2. Transiency and generally poor qualifications of Northland teachers contributed to poor achievement of schools.
3. Governing and administrative procedures in Northland need to be revised to permit a greater degree of local involvement and self-direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS:

One hundred recommendations were made.

Printed by the QUEEN'S PRINTER for the Province of Alberta, Edmonton

# REPORT OF THE

# NORTHLAND SCHOOL DIVISION

# STUDY GROUP

Submitted to

HON. JULIAN KOZIAK
MINISTER OF EDUCATION
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

July 1975

## FOREWORD

The Northland School Division Study Group was established by order of the Minister of Education, Hon. L. D. Hyndman, pursuant to Section 9 of the Department of Education Act. A copy of the order, dated August 9 1974, is appended to this report. The order included the terms of reference of the Group.

With respect to the name, Study Group, it was adopted by the three appointed by the order because it was desirable to have a simple name by which they could be identified. It seemed to indicate reasonably satisfactorily the nature of the purposes and procedures. They were not conducting an investigation as that term is commonly understood.

Throughout the period of its activity the Study Group received excellent cooperation from all those from whom it sought information, advice and opinions. This was true of the board and officers of the division as well as persons within government and elsewhere.

Three general observations should be made. The first, which appears occasionally in the text of the report, is that there seems to be no way of avoiding writing or commenting in words that appear to be of general application, in terms of averages, or the frequent or usual case. One must refer at times to the division, or to the communities served, or to teachers or pupils in a collective sense. Always however, and the Study Group was fully concious of this, there is a range, a spectrum applicable to every attribute or condition.

If someone, or some group, feels that a reference is too inclusive it can only be said that exceptions were recognized but that generalizations were necessary to carry forward the main argument with respect to any particular matter.

The second is that in the text of the report the same background information may appear in more than one chapter. This may give the appearance of repetition. This seemed desirable where the facts or perceptions had an applicability to more than one aspect of the report. The alternative was to make references back or forth to other chapters, involving reader effort or loss of effect in respect of the immediate argument or concern.

Thirdly, it was inevitable that at many schools or in many communities the Study Group should be informed of problems or of alleged deficiencies of a quite specific nature. It was hoped or expected that the Study Group would or could do something about the water supply, or storage space or a particular personnel problem. The Group took the position that it was interested in all such matters in so far as they added to its total sum of knowledge about the division, its state and its procedures, but not to the extent of serving as an inspection team to discover and deal with specific needs. Persons presenting such matters were urged to pursue them directly with the division's administration.

Notwithstanding the above general principle occasional matters were communicated to the division where the Group considered that it might render a special and immediate service by so doing.

The report submitted herewith has the approval of all three members of the Study Group, whose individual views at times had to be reconciled or modified in order that a consensus might be reached.

R. J. Carney

Daniel Ewasiuk

D. Ewasiuk, Secretary

W. H. Swift, Chairman

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CHAPTER ONE

## Study Procedure

Following its appointment the Study Group laid out a program of action which, with some modifications, was carried forward. It comprised the following:

1. A visit to each of the communities served by Northland School Division, including Susa Creek - Muskeg River and Elk - South Wapiti where pupils are transported to schools operated by other school jurisdictions. A day was allocated to each community.

Where schools were in operation the schedule in each case was as follows:

a) An observation of the school while in operation, including short visits to all or most of the classrooms;

b) Some examination of the school plant including grounds, and to some degree, the teachers residences;

c) A meeting with the school staff and short discussions with some of the individual members thereof, including teacher- and counsellor- aides;

d) A public meeting to which members of the community were invited.

The meetings were advertised by radio, in the press, by public notices and through the schools.

The classroom observations were necessarily brief. They were not intended to be in the nature of inspectorial visits serving rather to enable the study team to get the feel of the operations, to look at pupils' work, to note the nature of books, materials and equipment available, and to identify problems, especially those of a more obvious nature. These visits served in many instances to enable teachers to make personal observations.

The examination of school plants was not intended to be exhaustive in respect of architecture, services, facilities and the like but rather to provide the Group with general impressions as to the adequacy of the buildings and their environs.

The staff meeting was usually lively. The principal and teachers were encouraged to discuss all aspects of their service in and for Northland. In many instances a meeting had been held in advance, there having been prepared a list of subjects that the teaching staff wished to discuss or with respect to which they wished to make observations or recommendations. Many of these meetings revealed quite different points of view to be held by various members of the staff on some subjects, while on others there was usually considerable accord. Teacher- and counsellor- aides were usually present during these meetings but they made very few comments.

While by no means an exhaustive list the following points quite frequently arose:

a) A desire for more supervisory visits, and of greater duration, from the Superintendent and his staff;

b) Improvement in the processes and procedures for the procurement of supplies;

c) Communication problems, or alleged inadequacies, in dealings with the divisional office;

d) Teacher recruitment;

e) Teacher retention;

f) Pupil attendance problems;

g) Curriculum matters, - the adequacy of the provincial curriculum, native culture, the

place of the Cree language in Cree speaking and Cree heritage communities;

h) Buildings, classrooms, ancillary space;

i) Maintenance - school, grounds, utilities, residences;

j) Grading of pupils, including retardation and automatic promotion;

k) High school services.

The public meetings were, by any normal standard, well attended, probably a considerably high percentage of those eligible than one gets to a school meeting elsewhere in the province in the absence of a crisis or controversial proposition.

The Study Group did not come to the communities with proposals to make, or services to offer. Its purpose was to obtain the views of the people as to how well they considered themselves to be served by their schools, and by Northland and its officers, and to hear suggestions for change or improvement.

In the last respect the matters raised were almost entirely of an immediate and practical nature, - improvement of water supply, leveling of playgrounds, desire for a gymnasium. The matter of high school services frequently arose, usually with the request that there be "a high school" right at home.

Two matters were consistently raised by the Study Group:

a) Native culture, historical and current, and its relation to the school program;

b) Where applicable, the place of the Cree language in the school.

All of these points will be discussed later in the report.

In many cases community leaders, or status persons in the communities, chiefs, band councillors, colony officers, and the like, were present and spoke to questions raised.

In some communities interpretation was needed, or desirable, for a portion of the group assembled. The Group received conflicting advice in this respect. Is it better to bring an interpreter along, or to rely on the services of a local person? The latter was followed and seemingly with success. Verbatim and sequential interpretation was employed at times, but generally better progress was made when pursuant to a question the assembly discussed it in Cree with occasional further involvement of the Study Group until a concensus was reached.

It has to be reported that as far as the public meetings were concerned there was little evidence of dissatisfaction, except for specifics as noted above. Following one meeting a band councillor spoke to the Chairman and said, "We have no complaints."

At another meeting a spokesman made it clear that the group was not accustomed to discussing. They wanted propositions, "motions", to which they could raise their hands, yes or no.

The Study Group is quite aware, as it was advised and cautioned on many occasions, that native peoples, especially those in more isolated communities, are not given to quick responses. It may well be that views are held that were not expressed. There were at times inherent communication problems. It can only be said that the Group attempted to give every opportunity for expression. If opinions were strongly held opportunity was given for them to surface.

On the other hand, the group is aware that eliciting comments on schooling situations is dependent largely on the respondent's knowledge of the school environment as well as a belief that suggestions will be taken seriously. The point is that not all meetings were of such

a nature that they elicited deeply-felt perceptions from the community. With more extensive preparatory work many more suggestions and ideas might have been obtained.

In almost all cases the attempts of the Group to obtain some reaction to matters relating to how the division is governed, its board constituted, and its affairs administered, elicited little response. In part it has to be concluded that the people had little or no knowledge of these matters, or concern about them. One purpose served by the exercise was to provide to the people information, albeit to a limited degree, regarding the nature and operations of the division.

The Study Group did not sense any hostility. Many meetings were followed by the serving of refreshments during which time many individual conversations were entered into.

Wherever possible the format of the meeting was arranged informally, chairs in a large circle with members of the Group dispersed, to avoid the appearance of separation from the persons present. On one occasion the Group met with the annual meeting of a Metis Colony. On another it sat in on the meeting of a Band Council to which a general invitation had been extended for the transaction of Band business.

2. Meetings with the Advisory and Consultative Committee, established by the Minister. Three such meetings were held. They were of assistance to the Group in respect of organizing its work, in identifying subject areas for examination, and as a sounding board for ideas and proposals. Members were provided copies of chapter drafts as completed.

3. Public hearings. The availability of the Group for two days to receive briefs and to hear representation was considerably advertised. Some participation was solicited. The result was satisfying, or disappointing, depending on point of view. Few representations were made. This may imply that few concerns existed, other than among those being contacted directly. If such is the case some comfort can be taken by those immediately involved in Northland's operations. On the other hand it may only mean that concerned persons found it inconvenient to come forward.

Those who made presentations are listed in an appendix. Their contributions and discussions were much appreciated.

4. Interviews of individual trustees, privately. It was considered desirable not only to meet with the divisional board as a group, but to permit each trustee to speak his mind as freely as he or she might care to do outside the somewhat inhibiting situation of a formal board meeting.

5. Interviews of the chief officers of the board, also individually, where their problems and concerns could be more freely expressed.

6. Discussions with various officers of the Department of Education.

7. Interviews of or discussions with a considerable number of individuals and groups who might have information or views that would be of interest to the Study Group. A list is appended.

8. Visits to other schools and school jurisdictions which have or might have some involvement with Northland. List appended.

9. Visits farther afield, especially Frontier School Division in Manitoba, the Department of Northern Saskatchewan at La Ronge, the Department of Education at Yellowknife, N.W.T., and the native administered school at Rae-Edzo, N.W.T.

10. The institution of studies. In particular these related to the problems of drop-outs and retardation, the financial affairs of the

division, and native languages in school. The Study Group also had the benefit of a number of community profiles prepared by the Northern Development Group of the Government of Alberta.

11. The examination of a considerable quantity of documentary and pertinent reading material.

12. Attending a number of Northland arranged or oriented meetings, all of which served to provide some insight into its operations or problems.

13. The holding of regular, somewhat more formal meetings of the Study Group itself, supplementing the informal discussions that took place while en route and at other times.

In mid-June after the drafting of this report was well under way a final meeting was held at Peace River with the chairman and chief officers of the division for further discussions of a number of matters which required more information or explanation. It was of interest to discover at this meeting that a number of plans were under way, or that steps had already been taken, to move in the direction of some of the recommendations which were already in the draft of the report.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical

Northland School Division No. 61, came into existence pursuant to a Ministerial Order dated December 9, 1960. This order was issued under the authority of The School Act. Hence, in its initial form it was created having the same sort of existence, powers and responsibilities as any other school division.

No formal documentation appears to exist setting forth the reasons for its establishment. In the minds of some of those who were about at the time, two seem to be uppermost:

1. A desire to do something better in the way of provision of school services for outlying, chiefly northern, communities.

2. A desire to bring the schools concerned into the main stream of the Alberta educational family through the establishment of a more effective administrative system in terms of financial arrangements and the availability of a superintendent of schools having direct rather then marginal interest in such schools.

While in order to be brought into Northland Division as constituted prior to the enacting of The Northland School Division Act, a school had to be located in an organized school district, which requirement was taken care of by some formation and modification of districts, the actual antecedents of the division's schools were several including schools operated

a) by independent rural schools districts;

b) by the Metis Rehabilitation Branch, a governmental organization, through the indirect process of a subsidized school district encompassing each Metis colony;

c) by mission agencies of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches;

d) by the Department of Indian Affairs under a variety of arrangements, which often accepted Metis as well as Indian children.

The virtues and deficiencies of these schools are well described in an unpublished manuscript written by Dr. J. W. Chalmers, first official trustee of the division, from which the following quotations are taken.

> The Department of Education survey of the Metis school population indicated that their school achievement was very low. At all grade levels the percentage of Metis children who were over-age for their grade, i.e. educationally retarded, was at least twice to three times the proportion for white children. At the upper end of the school system, the Metis had almost disappeared. Of 2,347 such children in six northern systems, only six, or 0.3% of the total were in Grades X and XI, but 764, or 7.4% of 10,320 white children were in the same grades.
>
> Other native children, Indian and Metis, attended Mission schools operated by Protestant and Roman Catholic organizations. Such schools were financed by a small grant from the provincial government, tuition fees from Indian Affairs (when applicable), and help from denominational sources. In general, these schools were marginally housed, frequently in makeshift frame or log buildings, indadequately equipped, poorly staffed, often by instructors without the least vestige of any professional preparation as teachers. Typical of these was the Kateri school, named for the venerable Mohawk convert Catherine Tekakwitha, located some 80 miles almost directly north of the town of Slave Lake. There, 49 native children, almost equally divided between registered Indian and Metis children, were crowded into a disused HBC warehouse, so small that one child actually had her desk in the doorway to the room. The school furniture was homemade, just barely acceptable. Readers, supplied by the Department of Education, were standard issue, other books were few, old, and tattered. The teacher, a middle-aged woman, had had much experience in such schools as Kateri, but limited general and no professional education.

The original order listed twenty school districts as comprising the division. Some of these are no longer in the division, or have become inactive. Over the years a number of districts have been added, in some instances newly formed to enable the division to service new or additional settlements.

During the initial period of the division's existence, the time that it operated exclusively under the provisions of the School Act, two possibilities were available for its governance. A board of trustees could be elected from subdivisions, which was the normal and expected procedure in school divisions generally. It was deemed, however, that this procedure would be quite impractical for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, the division was seen to be immediately and for a considerable time to come in essence a ward of the provincial government. Also, it was essential that the new creature move with dispatch and with capacity to apply at once administrative knowledge.

Hence the decision was made to pursue the second possibility and to operate under an Official Trustee, appointed by the Minister of Education. There was available in the law authority for this to be done in respect of any school district of division if in the opinion of the Minister such were necessary and desirable.

The official trustee appointed was Dr. J. W. Chalmers who was Director of School Administration in the Department of Education. To the division was attached, as was provided for in the law at the time, a Superintendent of Schools, Mr. L. R. Gue, employed by the Department. A divisional office was set up in Edmonton under a Secretary-Treasurer. It was not located within the premises of the Department. While this involved the Official Trustee in considerable inconvenience in moving between his two headquarters it did make it clear that while the division was a special case with close relationships with government it did have a separate existence and was an entity in itself.

The Official Trustee and the Superintendent proceeded with vigor to create an administrative structure and to move in the direction of improved facilities and services.

In the year 1965 there was passed by the Legislature of Alberta The Northland School Division Act. This Act recognized Northland Division as a special case. While still subject in the main to The School Act, there were a few special provisions of a distinctive nature. Two of these were of primary importance.

The first was that the division should be governed by a school board. However, recognizing that election of trustees in the usual fashion was not feasible, it was provided that a board of five trustees should be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. The Board so appointed included a Chairman who was a member of the staff of the University of Alberta. One resident of Fort McMurray was appointed, this being the first recognition of local participation. The other three were employees respectively of the Departments of Education, Municipal Affairs and Public Welfare.

It will be seen that the voting control was in the hands of civil servants though this did not necessarily mean that they saw eye to eye on matters before the Board. The new arrangement dispersed responsibility, was a step in the direction of self government, albeit a small one, but in some respects slowed the processes of decision making. There was still a departmentally employed superintendent of schools.

In 1968 the size of the Board was increased to seven and in that year there was made the first appointment of a trustee of native origin.

Without detailing the steps one by one it

may be said that gradually further appointments of persons of native origin were made. As of 1974-75 the Board comprised the following:

1. A Chairman, paid by the Department of Education, who is deemed to devote full time to the affairs of the division. He has an office in Edmonton and also at divisional head-quarters in Peace River. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the Board, which means that in addition to being the Board's presiding and chief signing officer, he is fully involved in its day-to-day operations and the movements and activities of the total staff. This is an unusual arrangement when compared to the organizational structure of other school divisions or districts. The previous chairmen were not chief executive officers. In fact during some, if not most years, there was no such person, authority being divided between secretary-treasurer and superintendent, and perhaps others.

2. An officer of the Department of Education. The rationale of this has been that since the division receives most of its revenue from the Department, and the Department, on behalf of the Government, is the final source of funds, close liaison with the Department is desirable both from the standpoint of the Department and of the division.

3. A Metis, resident in Edmonton, who has close relationships with Metis and other native organizations.

4. Four persons, all Native and all women, resident in dispersed communities of the division, Grouard, Wabasca, Paddle Prairie and Elizabeth Metis Colony near Grand Centre.

It will be seen, consequently, that the nature of the Board has moved a very considerable distance in the direction of native and local participation.

The second major change effected by The Northland School Division Act was to enlarge the division's territorial responsibility. Whereas formerly, under The School Act, it consisted only of, and was responsible for, school districts, it was now, in effect, to comprise all lands north of Township 55, running across the province, which were not within any other school jurisdiction, or not in an Indian Reserve. It thus became a great geographic area with responsibilities for servicing all communities therein whether school districts were in existence about them or not.

Much history might be written about the means used to develop or provide services-establishing facilities, recruiting staff, caring for maintenance, developing programs and the like. "These can best be dealt with in the discussion of specific matters to follow."

One thing that can be said, and properly ought to be said, is that despite any deficiencies that may be revealed or referred to in what follows in this report the fact is that compared to what existed in terms of facilities and services in 1960 there has been very great progress indeed. Each administration has made its contribution and is to be commended therefor.

Finally, in review, mention may be made of headquarters. The office was first established in rented quarters in Edmonton not far from the Department of Education, a necessary convenience for the official trustee. Later an office building was erected in the outskirts of Edmonton.

In 1971 the Government of Alberta advised the division that it was to move its headquarters to Peace River, it being alleged to the Study Group that this was done, and required, without the matter coming before the Board for advice. It would only be an academic exercise to look into this, it now being a fait accompli. It may be said, however, that a number of persons, many of whom seem to be in some position to know, say that from the standpoint of efficiency of operation and service this was

a mistake.

Some arguments can be found in support of either locale, and in fact of still another, Slave Lake, but the Study Group concluded that this is not an issue that can be profitably raised at this time. Operations are well established in Peace River; new accommodation is in process of development; it seems best to accept Peace River as headquarters.

CHAPTER THREE

## The Uniqueness of Northland School Division

While Northland School Division No. 61 functions in many respects as do other school authorities in Alberta, districts, divisions and the school committees of counties, it has a number of characteristics that set it apart. These characteristics, or most of them, create administrative problems which go far beyond, in scope and intensity, those faced by other jurisdictions. Most of these in turn have a financial impact. Hence it is quite unfair to make statistical comparisons with other school authorities, almost all of which, on the surface at least, would seem to be disparaging of the division's operations.

We shall look at a number of these major deviations from the norm of school divisions generally.

### 1. Geographical Area

The Northland School Division Act provides that the division comprises all that part of Alberta lying north of township 55 which is not included in any other district, division or county, or in an Indian reserve. The north boundary of the township 55 line is some fifteen miles north of Edmonton. Hence a tremendous area is encompassed although at any particular time the division is only seriously involved where there are communities to be served. There is always the prospect of a new community forming. Two new schools were put into operation in September 1974, involving much administrative effort and expense to provide staff and physical plant.

### 2. Dispersion of Communities

The communities in which Northland operates schools or provides service in some other manner are spread into the four corners of the total area described above, and up, down and across. At the time of the writing of this report thirty schools were being operated and the children from the following communities were being provided for by way of transportation arrangements, Antonberg, Anzac, Carcajou, Elk-South Wapiti, Fort Fitzgerald, Indian Cabins, Muskeg River, and Susa Creek.

These last mentioned may require less frequent attention than actual school operations but must be kept under surveillance and occasionally busing or high school attendance problems arise.

### 3. Large Number of Schools

The school divisions and counties of Alberta operate a highly varying number of schools, from a low of four to a high of some seventeen. The median is about eight or nine. Of the number, whatever it may be, from one to three lie in the same village, town or city as the divisional office and hence are immediately accessible to administrative officers. In many cases the number includes one or more one-room schools operated on Hutterite Colonies.

As noted above Northland operates thirty schools. This in itself, without regard to the factor of distance, creates administrative involvement much in excess of that of the average school division. Every school, regardless of size generates needs for attention.

The three factors referred to above, total geographical area, dispertion of communities, and number of schools combine to produce a logistics factor which can be pointed up by the following comparison.

A central Alberta county operates fourteen schools, considerably above the average for counties and divisions. One is located at headquarters. One is a Hutterite colony school. The aggregate of the distances of the schools from the county office by highway is under 250 miles.

If in the case of Northland the distance of each school from the divisional office "as the crow flies" is determined and these are added, the total is approximately 5100 miles, over twenty times as great. But this figure in itself is quite inadequate in that the roads or air routes which have to be travelled are in so many cases so circuitous, such as going to Edmonton to get to Fort Chipewyan, going to Fort McMurray to get to Janvier, or going to Slave Lake to get to Wabasca, that the true relevant figure must be more like 7000 miles.

Time and distance may be saved by using charter aircraft but this greatly increases expense. The costs of conventional means of travel, car or scheduled air line, are themselves very high under the circumstances.

It may be observed also that not only do these factors of extent, dispersion and number affect the movement of people, -superintendent, supervisors, trustees and others, -they become even more serious when the movement of goods is involved, -building materials, mobile housing, equipment, materials required for repairs and maintenance, school supplies, -all the steady stream of articles, large and small, which must flow to provide a school and to keep it in operation.

Finally it may be noted that although during the last few years there had been considerable building of roads to remote communities, reducing the degree of isolation, a considerable number of schools are still not served by any road. Smaller items must be flown in by charter flight. Heavier items may be brought in only over winter road or in some fashion involving much expense and time.

The references above are chiefly to transportation, whether of people or goods. A similar situation prevails with respect to communication. Some communities have no post office. Mail can be received and dispatched only intermittently from or at some distant post office. Many communities have no telephone service. A number have what is called a mobile telephone. This is a form of radio telephone located in one place only in the community. It is a boon to the residents, including the school, but it has its limitations in terms of effective and rapid communication. Regular telephone service is gradually reaching into communities not heretofore served but there is still a long way to go before there can be ready communication between the divisional office and all the schools.

4. Taxation Base

A normal school division or county has a taxation base of some magnitude. Some are very wealthy in this respect. Others are not so well endowed and because of this may require special financial assistance.

In the majority of cases the division or county has a sufficient assessment of real and other property that a significant proportion of its revenue comes from that source by way of the supplementary requisition. When the annual budget is struck the board or school committee, after paring its expenditures and computing its revenues from all sources, effects a balance by placing on its ratepayers a levy which through the supplementary requisition shows in mills on the tax notices of the municipalities. The board, consequently, makes its final decision in terms of how much taxation it is prepared to impose on its ratepayers.

It is not so with Northland. The total assessment for 1973 was $2,237,610. A supplementary requisition rate of 21.5 mills, a quite high one, was imposed producing $48,108. This was met in part through electric power and pipeline revenues received by the Department of Municipal Affairs which is the municipal authority. In a total revenue of some $3,500,000 this is relatively inconsequential. The assessment base cannot be used as a balancing factor for the budget. Hence the final question the

board must ask is not "How heavily can we tax our ratepayers?" but rather, "How much can we reasonably ask the Province of Alberta to provide us by way of special grant? How much can we expect to receive?" This places the whole matter of budgeting in a very different sort of game.

It may be observed also that most of the tax revenue comes from commercial and industrial installations. Most of the residents whose children are educated in the schools, for various reasons are not assessed and taxed at all. Hence the taxation factor which operates vis-a-vis a school trustee and his constituency in an ordinary school division is quite inoperative in Northland.

5. Residences for Teachers and Utility Services

The nature of the communities served by Northland is such that it cannot be expected either that a teacher will own his own residence, or that he can expect to find a house or other accommodation to rent. The latter do not exist. Hence, in order to get teachers at all the division must become a landlord of considerable proportions. The residences, numbering some 86 are chiefly mobile homes placed semi-permanently near the operating schools. They are occasionally moved from one location to another as circumstances change. They, and their furnishings, have to be maintained.

In no community is any public sewage system available for the hooking in of schools and residences. The division is faced with the necessity of establishing lagoons, disposal fields or whatever is feasible in each circumstance, at much expense for installation and maintenance attention. Many are of limited effectiveness.

The same applies to water supply. The division must dig wells, provide dug-outs, haul water, or whatever is feasible, again at great expense and often with much frustration and administrative effort.

While grid power, like telephone service, gradually extends to the communities served by Northland there still remain a number of schools and residences which are provided with power by local plants supplied by the division and served by it in respect of fuel and maintenance. These are a constant problem.

It will be seen, consequently, that the division, as landlord and utility supplier, is involved in a host of problems that are completely unknown to the ordinary school authority. The office, the maintenance department, the superintendent and others find that much of their time has to be devoted to non-educational but highly demanding functions.

6. Recruitment and Retention of Teaching Staff

While they are perhaps effects rather than causal circumstances it must be observed that the cumulative effect of all the items listed above is to make it more difficult for Northland to recruit teachers and to retain them. The division has a much more difficult time than other school authorities in these respects.

7. High School Service

At the time of this study Northland was operating no high school. Only at Mistassiniy (Desmarais) is Grade X offered although this grade is in prospect for Atikameg. While the number of pupils graduating from grade IX is small, and an even smaller number proceed to high school, the division is involved in continuing problems of fees, allowances, boarding arrangements, guidance and counselling, and complications arising therefrom. Few divisions have this sort of administrative complication, at least of the same magnitude.

8. Ethnic Background

Of Northland's thirty schools three are populated entirely, or almost so, by white children. Two or three schools enrol both white and native children in considerable proportions. Otherwise the schools serve native communities. In such schools there may be an occasional white child, sons and daughters of teachers, storekeepers or others serving the community. They are, however, essentially schools attended by native children.

This fact has a number of consequences many of which will be referred to in the discussion of particular problems later in this report.

Some of the most obvious are these:

a) The economic status of most of the communities is at a low level;

b) In many communities the cultures, the history and traditions, the life styles, even the language in common use, differ substantially from those to be found elsewhere, and from those of the teaching staffs employed. There may well be an ambivalence, or a spectrum, in these respects within any particular district, but in most they constitute a situation requiring different approaches and various sorts of flexibility.

c) A very pronounced factor, arising from aspects of b) above is the attitude towards attendance. The parental and community sanctions which operate to keep children in school, and in regular attendance, in most Alberta communities operate with much less effect in native communities. Hence in many schools attendance levels are lower with consequent limitations on academic progress and continual frustration felt by teachers.

Northland is unique in that it has a special responsibility to serve this clientele, one whose historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ from those of most Albertans. The communities in which many of these children and their parents live were established by native people who desired to live close to the land in its natural state. In order to do this they chose frontier areas largely unwanted at the time by the dominant society. These communities are in the process of change, of development; they are not static.

But change must be gradual and those from outside who are involved in it, including Northland and its schools, must be aware of the inter-cultural factors involved. There must be sensitivity, empathy, and a readiness to cooperate with the people of the communities.

Communication is frequently a problem, not only in the physical sense as referred to in 3) above but also in respect of language differences. The division must be sensitive to this problem and seek ways and means of making sure that Cree or Chipewyan speakers with whom they must communicate are enabled to understand the import of what is being put before them, whether individually or as groups.

From all the above it will be seen that as an administrative entity Northland Division has a host of circumstances that place challenges and financial and operational burdens upon it and its staff which are largely foreign to other school jurisdictions. The result is that time, energy and funds that are sorely needed for more productive ends are often absorbed in ancillary operations and are not available for the achievement of other purposes.

It means also that the division is placed in a rather special relationship to the Department of Education, or the government of the province, to which it must look for financial support and the balancing of its budget. While the Department does not continuously monitor its spending the approved special grant does finally determine the level of expenditure which can be established.

CHAPTER FOUR

## Purposes and Philosophy

From time to time the Study Group has been presented with the question, "What is the educational philosophy of Northland School Division?"

While the question is more important in respect of the present operations of the division, and of the future, a word about the past is in order, adding to what appears in the historical chapter.

Was there, at the time Northland Division was established, any special philosophy, any set of goals or unique purposes, in the minds of those involved, including the Government of Alberta, the Minister of Education, the officers of the Department of Education, the first official trustee, and the first superintendent of schools?

The Chairman of the Study Group was Deputy Minister of Education at the time of establishment. The Study Group has interviewed both the first official trustee and the first superintendent, and has had the benefit of examining some documents including the excellent, unpublished, history of the first decade of Northland School Division, the "Moose" Division, prepared by Dr. J. W. Chalmers, first official trustee, the driving force in getting the division operational.

The fact is that no one recalls, nor can point to any motivation for the establishment of the division other than a desire to improve schooling, as normally understood, in the scattered, impoverished, feeble schools serving a variety of Indian and Metis communities. Better facilities, continuous rather than haphazard operation, better teachers, order rather than semi-chaos, these were the objectives. Philosophical considerations related to the future of native peoples, if thought of at all, were very secondary to the immediate problems of upgrading the delivery of school services in the largely wilderness communities.

Many attempts have been made to set forth a philosophy, a statement of objectives or purposes, for public school systems. The Alberta Department of Education has issued such a statement in the year 1975 under the title Goals of Basic Education, applicable to grades 1 to 12. As is customarily the case it has been produced pursuant to the efforts of a substantial and representative committee. As with most such documents it sets forth a variety of aspects of life and of schooling that are deemed to require or warrant attention, and with respect to which it is hoped and expected that positive results will be achieved. Simplified, the range encompasses good citizenship, changing society, communication skills, thinking abilities, tolerance, the world of work, management skills, curiosity, leisure, health, culture and beauty, basic and special knowledge. No order of importance, priority, or emphasis is provided. The list is similar to most such statements that have been prepared over many years in many places reflecting a compromise and consensus among a variety of persons and points of view.

The schools of Northland Division, being part of the provincial school system, are presumably expected to achieve the sorts of results implied in the Goals outlined above.

A further consideration is whether, having regard to the special circumstances affecting its schools, or most of them, there should be additional objectives or philosophies. Northland currently has no statement setting such forth.

The crux of the questions asked, or of the points of view expressed, is whether the educational program should be designed, or assumed, to promote the ultimate integration of the native people into the larger society or whether it should assume a continuing rather different

and somewhat isolated style of living and somehow reflect that circumstance in its objectives and programs. There are voices also advocating an intermediate position, not rigidly one way or the other, a bicultural viewpoint.

In all of this it must be kept in mind that there are substantially different cultural realities in Northland communities which must be taken into account. These, together with the historical experience of Northland communities, indicate that considerable additional resources must be assigned to make a fully equal school experience possible.

It must be emphasized again that there is a danger of assuming that all Northland schools and communities, the native ones, are alike. Such is far from the case. Garden Creek, Fox Lake, Chipewyan Lakes are still very isolated. They have at present minimal contact with the rest of Alberta. On the other hand many others are, because of accessibility by road, in increasing external contact both in terms of people from outside the community coming in and people from the community going out for a variety of purposes.

As is mentioned elsewhere in this report the Study Group's visits to all the communities served by the division by land vehicle and by air revealed the steady penetration of roads, of telephones, of power lines, of various other sorts of intrusion of the larger society. Isolation is fast disappearing, or diminishing, and the areas of wilderness to which groups may retreat if so inclined are steadily being reduced. The communities of Wabasca, of Cadotte Lake, of Atikameg and of Calling Lake are not and cannot be the same communities as they were before all-weather roads gave access to Slave Lake, to Peace River, to High Prairie and to Athabasca. These centers, and others that are accessible through the highway system, constitute an attraction for people previously very much isolated. The way of life of the people of many Northland communities is changing, for good or ill, and the process seem to be irreversible.

There are large and important questions as to the desirability of change and of its speed. Especially, should government accelerate the diminution of isolation through road construction and the encouragement of other forms of penetration? What is best for the people concerned? More important, perhaps, is what do the people themselves think? There may be ambivalence in this respect. At Sandy Lake, the Study Group was informed, there are those who are happy to see the excellent road from Desmarais being built, while others are apprehensive, seeing a threat to their way of life. The Study Group does not consider that it is its function, nor for that matter has it the wisdom, to pronounce on this subject. It can say only that change is rapidly occuring, and that both communities and schools must be aware of it. All sorts of penetration, whether governmental or industrial, should follow careful consideration of the possible social effects thereof upon the indigenous populations.

It is true that the Treaty Indians on reserves have a sort of built in isolation in that white society may not so readily penetrate. But Jean D'Or Prairie is now served, very recently, by a good gravel road from Fort Vermilion. Intercourse and mutual involvement of the two communities will continue to increase. For example, plans were afoot for the school pupils to engage in sports activities involving Fort Vermilion pupils. When this occurs, a new vista opens to pupils whose isolation is reduced thereby in considerable measure. In any event, Indian reserves are served by Northland only by agreement, and their schools can be withdrawn on short notice.

The question that has to be asked, then, is as to whether, in most cases, the interests of the pupils are best served if the attitude of the schools is that most of their pupils will eventually need an education that prepares them for contact with and involvement in,

perhaps even transfer to, society in general, or, contrariwise, for life in some degree of isolation, or for that matter for an intermediate position.

The fact is, of course, that it is difficult to define or delineate different programs for these purposes. It is perhaps more a matter of attitude. For example, a school staff might be strong in its encouragement of pupils to persist in school, to go to high school, on the premise that only in this way can they be properly prepared to enter the world of work and have social acceptance in the wider society. If the contrary view were held, that the future of the child lay in remaining in an isolated community with restricted external contacts, persistence into high school might seem less necessary, and might even lead to directions not in harmony with community views.

Conversations with teaching staffs revealed a considerable view that the future of the children being taught was inevitably and inexorably bound up with the wider society, that this should be recognized and schools organized and conducted accordingly. Some, however, who had thought on this subject were very desirous of some type of bicultural preparation in which the youngster would have access to the wider society without losing his own self-concept and special identity.

Discussions with parents and others were less definitive but as will be indicated elsewhere in this report the persistent view was that they wanted good basic education, essentially the same as available in Alberta schools generally, and with little evidence of desire for special programs or arrangements that somehow relate to their particular backgrounds, locales, and circumstances.

There were various conjectures as to why this might be so, the most common being that this was the sort of education they had themselves experienced in their various opportunities for schooling, usually limited, and hence was what was familiar to them. It was also suggested that they were aware of their own deficiencies in respect of the fundamental skills arising from their limited school opportunities and wished to see these deficiencies overcome in their children. It was further suggested that through many generations the dominant attitude of the white, the authoritative society, was that native culture should be suppressed, which may have created a lack of respect for their own culture among natives themselves. These, however, are only speculations which may be interesting, but the essential point is that fundamental, main line, education is what appeared to be favored. The people's views in this regard must be respected.

While it would appear that at the time of its establishment, and subsequently, the purpose of schooling in Northland was viewed largely as the provision of equal services, one member of the Study Group contends that Northland's failure, for whatever reasons, to develop a bicultural schooling environment is a very serious shortcoming.

As far as the division, as a legal and administrative entity is concerned, no statement of purpose in any formal sense has been seen. None appears in the Policy Handbook. Discussions with the trustees revealed, however, the general view that the aim, the ideal, is to achieve a level of competence and success such that their schools will do for their pupils essentially what other Alberta schools do for theirs. There are serious impediments to achieving this goal but it is nevertheless the goal.

The Study Group did not find or encounter any directions to schools or teachers setting forth this point of view, but in the absence of anything to the contrary, or by way of amendment, school staffs may reasonably assume that they are to attempt to conduct schools in the normal Alberta fashion, within the limits imposed by special circumstances and conditions.

This is not to say that there is any discouragements of flexibility, of innovation, of understanding, of devices to achieve rapport, of recognition of native culture and the like. On the contrary these are encouraged and commended, but in the context of an aim to achieve good general education as conceived Alberta wide.

The Study Group was interested to discover that Frontier School Division, Manitoba, has attempted to set forth a special Philosophy and Objectives. This is to be found in a document prepared for the information of teachers and prospective teachers.

The Study Group is of the opinion that should it, or should Northland School Division, attempt to produce something in the nature of a statement of philosophy suitable for the division it would not likely differ much from the Frontier statement. It reads as follows:

Philosophy and Objectives

It is difficult to state a philosophy of education peculiarly appropriate for Frontier schools. In general terms, it need not be too different from that of any other school system, but there are some specific expectations of those teaching in Frontier communities:

1) It is expected that teachers will be sensitive to and accommodate the educational objectives of the people. This entails getting to know and respect the people and their culture. It means finding opportunities to allow the community to have a cultural input into the school.

2) It is expected that teachers will avoid making assumptions about what the future of the students is to be. Teachers are expected to equip the students so they will have genuine options in the future. The graduates may choose to find employment outside of their communities, or extend their education at another institution, or remain at home. Regardless of the choice they may make, the education provided should help them to live more successfully.

3) It is expected that academic achievement will be stressed as much as it is in any other school system. Teachers' expectations of their students (that is, the rate of learning) should be as high as they would be in any other system.

4) It is expected that a vital part of a school's objectives will be the development of a positive self-image by the student. Demonstrating respect for the student, for his parents, and for his culture is essential, as is allowing him to experience success.

5) It is expected that every effort will be made to humanize education. Kindness and warmth are important. Learning can be made enjoyable.

Within the Advisory and Consultative Committee which assisted the Study Group, the view was held that there should be such a statement prepared and adopted by the divisional board, not necessarily a replica of the Frontier statement, which would provide some guidance for board, administration, and teaching staff.

The Study Group accepts and endorses this viewpoint.

CHAPTER FIVE

## Governance

The question as to the manner in which Northland School Division should be governed, that is the nature and composition of its board of trustees, or equivalent, is a most perplexing one in which the ideal and the practicalities come into conflict.

In the section headed Historical, there is an outline of the sequence of arrangements that have been in effect over the period of Northland's existence. It may be well to review the present format.

There is currently a board of seven.* All of these are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, the terms of appointment being three years. There is a power of termination or removal. The current appointments are as follows:

1) A chairman appointed as such, resident in Edmonton, with a rented office there. He is deemed to be a full-time officer although this is not so provided by the Northland School Division Act, 1965. He is paid a salary directly by the Government, not by the division. His time is divided among the Edmonton office, the Peace River office, and travel within the division. He is also chief executive officer of the board, an unusual arrangement when compared with other school and municipal structures. This status has been conferred upon him by the school board itself, although the salary paid by the Department would appear to envisage full-time employment.

2) An employee of the Department of Education. There has been such an appointee on the board since the Northland School Division Act was passed by the Legislative Assembly in 1965. The person occupying this place on the board has always come from the business section of the Department, that concerned with finance, grants and the fiscal operations of school authorities. During the first decade of the division's life there was also a departmentally appointed superintendent of schools attached to the division, as was generally the case with divisions and counties.

While no document has been seen bearing on the matter, it can surely be assumed that because the support of the division comes so substantially from provincial funds, regular and special, the presence of a government person on the board was deemed logical. Since local appointment of superintendents has superseded provincial appointment this board member is the only direct liaison with the Department of Education.

The Study Group has no reason to believe that there is, or has been, any sort of day-to-day, or month-to-month surveillance through this appointee. Rather his presence merely assures that the affairs of the division are kept within the general awareness of the Department. It is assumed, of course, that if this officer has some significant concern or perplexity, he may discuss it with colleagues and superiors in the Department.

3) 4) 5) 6) 7) Five persons of native ancestry.

One is resident in Edmonton and has had a continuing prominence within Metis organizations. He serves as vice-chairman of the board. The board names its own vice-chairman annually.

The other four, all women, reside in geographically dispersed communities served by the division. The precise processes whereby they came to be selected for appointment have not been established. Suffice to say that each,

* Appended hereto is a list of the names of the persons currently serving as trustees showing the dates of original appointments and dates of termination of their current appointments. See appendix L.

at the time of her appointment, was deemed by the Minister of Education, and his advisers, to be competent and to have an acceptability at least in her immediate vicinity.

While the four resident trustees are geographically distributed they do not have any defined areas of special interest or responsibility; they are not from subdivisions. In fact, some information before the Study Group seemed to indicate that in some instances and at some times they felt that they had a special mandate to serve, or enhance, their particular communities. To the extent that this may have been true it is understandable having regard to the lack of any factors pointing to a zone obligation.

Mention is now made of the reactions of persons and groups consulted by the Study Group in respect of the nature and composition of the board.

First it has to be said that the public meetings held in the communities were very disappointing in this respect. In the main there was little concept or awareness of the significance of a school board, or of its manner of constitution. Occasionally, a somewhat knowledgeable voice was heard but this was very much the exception. It has to be said, consequently, a) that no widespread concern about the board was found, and b) that little guidance arose in respect of what reforms, if any, should be pursued.

It seemed to be accepted that school was a service provided by "government", using the term in a comprehensive sense, the precise details of its delivery being not of great concern. This condition seems to suggest a lack of communication between the division and the communities served.

The last public meeting held by the Study Group was at Conklin. At that meeting the general nature of the proposals set forth herein was described. They were received favorably by the meeting.

In the case of the teachers' meetings the situation was much the same with two differences, a) that at many of them there was a much greater knowledge of and about the processes of constituting a school board, and b) that a few voices were raised, as individual proponents and not as collective spokesmen, for a system of full and complete election of trustees. In this latter respect the basis seemed to be in terms of a concern for the democratic process. Discussion of ways and means of accomplishing this usually left the details unresolved.

It is to be borne in mind that with 50 per cent of the teachers new to the division and many new to Alberta, there was limited knowledge and experience from which to develop constructive criticisms and views.

The Northland School Division Local of the Alberta Teachers' Association in its brief favored election of a board of trustees of nine, with a chairman to be chosen by the board from its own membership. In the discussions which ensued there were again faced the inherent difficulties in accomplishing this desirable end immediately, and the proposition was less diligently pressed than its forthright statement in the brief would seem to have warranted.

Discussions with present and former officers, employees, board members and others, revealed very few who came out strongly for a fully elected board. The arguments for were usually based on what might be termed philosophical considerations, that is, that it is no longer acceptable to have a public body, especially a school board, appointed. The people must control their own affairs. It has been argued that the only way for the native people of Northland to advance is for them to be given free control, and the money available, letting them by the process of trial and error, and with professional advice available, learn how to govern. It is

argued that any immediate losses will be compensated for by long-term gains in competence and self-respect. This is a very appealing argument that cannot be dismissed out of hand. In fact, it is being, and has been, tried in a number of other areas with varying degrees of success.

The Study Group is of the view that a school system, especially one of the extent, complexity, and vulnerability of Northland, is not the best medium for this sort of experiment immediately. For one thing, recruitment of teachers is now fraught with much difficulty. The presence of, or the suspected presence of, an inexperienced governing body might further aggravate this problem. The goal must be achieved by way of a series of steps each of which adds its increment of responsibility and of competence.

Arguments presented to the Study Group against a full-fledged system of election of trustees resided chiefly in two points, a) that the people are not ready for it, either in terms of being able to identify and select knowledgeable trustees, or of understanding what the democratic governing of a school system is all about, and b) that the far-flung nature of the subdivisions that might be established makes any meaningful electoral process highly problematical.

Every native community, like any other community, has leaders and people of competence. Their leadership and their competencies have been surfacing and are becoming increasingly apparent in a variety of ways to the benefit of the communities and to the improvement of liaison with the wider society. What is required are processes, developmental steps, which will contribute to the identification of these persons by their communities, and which will enhance their capacities to assume legislative and administrative functions.

To these may be added that Northland differs from other school jurisdictions in that its board has practically no fiscal responsibility in relation to an assessment and tax base. A normally elected school board must, in budgeting, finally face the prospect of a tax levy on its ratepayers, including the members of the board itself, to cover the full extent of its proposed expenditures. This determines the supplementary requisition and the direct tax resulting therefrom. Consequently, it must choose between the addition of desirable expenditures and the level of taxation it can impose.

The Northland board is not in this position. Its supplementary requisition and the resultant tax revenue is nominal. It is not the final balancing feature of its budget. The special government grant stands in this position. Hence the final budgetary position of the board is not "How much taxation can we impose?" but "How much shall we request from the Government?" This is a very different position to be in with quite significant effects on directions of responsibility and accountability. An elected Northland board would stand in a somewhat different relationship to its electorate from that of other elected school boards in the Province.

It has been pointed out to the Study Group that very sizeable revenues accrue to the province from the petroleum and other industries located within the division and that although the division does not have direct access to these, it should not be thought of, in a territorial sense, of being only a financial burden. Its area is in total a financial asset. This is further discussed in chapter 17.

The Study Group, with some reluctance, has concluded that straightforward election as in any other school division, is not yet feasible, but that some steps to prepare for it should be taken. One member of the Study Group would like to set a target date five years hence for full election. The others prefer to leave the attainment of this goal a bit more flexible,

accelerating or decelerating depending on the success of the intermediate steps.

At this point a digression may be made in the direction of terminology.

It will be recalled that in the first instance Northland School Division was set up completely under The School Act. The board was an official trustee, an officer of the Department of Education. The legal requirements were observed but for all practical purposes the division was a ward of the Government. This procedure employed existing legislation and was simple to execute.

Suppose, however, that the Government of the day had decided instead to create, pursuant to appropriate legislation, not a school division but a Northern School Authority or Commission charged with responsibility for doing the same things that Northland has done. Instead of being an official trustee, this officer would have been a commissioner. Gradually, there would have been added to him an advisory board. In due course the Commission might have comprised several persons appointed as trustees are now.

The point is that had some term other than "division" been used, an appointed board would probably not seem such an anomaly. There would now merely be the question as to what steps, if any, should be taken to further provide for local participation and involvement.

The Study Group was aware of certain proposals made from time to time for the inclusion of the functions of Northland School Division in some larger, more comprehensive, authority such as a county type jurisdiction. It has examined The Northern Development Act, 1971, which was never proclaimed. That Act provided for a Northern Development Commission under the chairmanship of a Minister of the Crown. It would have had jurisdiction over a broad range of governmental services, including education, somewhat after the fashion of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan described in another chapter.

From no quarter did the Study Group receive any urging for such structure and did not pursue the proposition beyond giving it theoretical consideration which led to the conclusion that there are no compelling grounds pointing to the improvement of school services under such an arrangement.

The Study Group has come to the following conclusions:

1. The Board of Trustees should be increased to nine, comprised as follows:

a) A chairman, who might or might not be a resident of the division. Residence within the division would have some practical and psychological advantages. Things are never quite black and white. A chairman living in Edmonton has the possibility of more ready and frequent contact with government and other agencies. The person is more important than the residence. He should perform the normal functions of a school board chairman, and not be the chief executive officer of the board;

b) An officer of the Department of Education, preferably someone whose interests and background would give him competence both in respect of finance and administration and in the educational program of the division. The Study Group is of the opinion that this person should be one of more senior rank than has heretofore been the case;

c) Seven trustees each of whom would be a resident of one of seven subdivisions of the division. Having regard to the legal area of the division (see section 3 of The Northland School Division Act) subdividing by reference to school districts may not be appropriate and some other form of designation may be necessary.

The seven subdivisions are not easily arranged. The scattered nature of the division, the heterogeneity of the communities, the distances involved in any joining together of groups of schools and communities, make it impossible to arrange subdivisions without there being some artificiality and lack of homegeneity.

A further complication is that of schools on reserves serving Treaty Indians. By law Indian reserves are excluded from Northland School Division; they, legally, are the responsibility of the federal Department of Indian Affairs. Consequently, any persons living on reserves are not residents of the division. The full impact of this situation will not be felt until there is election of trustees in the normal manner. At that time, if the reserve Indians are to participate in the government of the School Division which provides them service, the question will have to be faced and resolved. This may well involve the attitude of the people concerned, of the Indian Association, of the Department of Indian Affairs and of persons and school authorities elsewhere since what is done in Northland will be a precedent for action in other places.

In the meantime, under the structure of local committees and school representatives suggested herein the Study Group proposes sufficiently flexible legal provisions, operating under the aegis of the division, that there will be no impediment to a Treaty Indian serving as a school representative, or being nominated and appointed to the board.

In this respect there are at least three sorts of situation such as:

a) Fox Lake, where the school is situated on a reserve, and all the residents are Treaty Indians;

b) Calling Lake, where the school is not on a reserve but is adjacent to a very small one upon which live some Indians who are not technically, residents of the division;

c) Fort MacKay, where there are many Treaty Indians who are not living on their reserves, which lie some miles to the northwest.

The view of the Study Group is that all of these should be eligible for full participation in the structure proposed.

There follows a proposed grouping of communities by subdivisions. There are many possible variants, and there is no intent to be dogmatic about these. It will be noted that the schools and communities whose transfer out of the division has been recommended have not been included.

## Suggested Subdivisions

### Subdivision One

Probable meeting place - Keg River

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Steen River | 8 |
| 2. | Paddle Prairie | 16 |
| 3. | Keg River (Dr. Mary Jackson) | 113 |
| 4. | Nose Creek | 8 |
| | Total No. of students | 145 |

### Subdivision Two

Probable meeting place - Jean D'Or

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Garden Creek | 38 |
| 2. | Fox Lake | 123 |
| 3. | Jean D'Or Prairie | 18 |
| | Total No. of students | 179 |

### Subdivision Three

Probable meeting place - Loon Lake

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Cadotte Lake | 41 |
| 2. | Little Buffalo Lake | 59 |
| 3. | Loon Lake | 45 |
| 4. | Peerless Lake | 41 |
| 5. | Trout Lake (Kateri) | 55 |
| 6. | Chipewyan Lake | 36 |
| | Total No. of students | 277 |

Subdivision Four

Probable meeting place - Grouard

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Atikameg | 182 |
| 2. | Gift Lake | 144 |
| 3. | Grouard | 170 |
| 4. | Peavine (Bishop Routhier) | 68 |
| | Total No. of students | 564 |

Subdivision Five

Probable meeting place - Desmarais

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Wabasca (St. Theresa) | 190 |
| 2. | Desmarais (Mistassiniy) | 277 |
| 3. | Sandy Lake (Pelican Mountain) | 22 |
| | Total No. of students | 489 |

Subdivision Six

Probable meeting place - Fort McMurray

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Fort Chipewyan | 58 |
| 2. | Fort MacKay | 60 |
| 3. | Anzac | 20 (est.) |
| 4. | Janvier | 80 |
| 5. | Conklin | 31 |
| | Total No. of students | 249 |

Subdivision Seven

Probable meeting place - Edmonton

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Elizabeth (A. C. McCully) | 52 |
| 2. | Fishing Lake (J. F. Dion) | 68 |
| 3. | Calling Lake | 114 |
| 4. | Susa Creek | 36 (est.) |
| 5. | Muskeg River | |
| | Total No. of students | 270 |

2. Subject to the provisions outlined below in respect of the appointment of the seven subdivisional trustees, all trustees should, for the time being, be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

Appointments should be for terms of three years, renewable for a second term only. All appointments should be effective from and terminate on specific dates in each year. The initial appointments should be made for one, two, or three years to provide for continuity of experience on the board.

3. The Chairman should be appointed as such by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, but there should be in prospect the election of a chairman from within and by the Board in the not too distant future.

It may be observed that the appointment of a full-time chairman, and his being chief executive officer, were actually a move back in the direction of an official trustee. While nominally only one member of the board, when votes are taken, the fact that he is a full-time appointee and is knowledgeable and assiduous in the pursuit of his duties, means that he carries very considerable weight in reaching decisions. This is simply inherent in the situation and does not reflect upon him in any derogatory sense. It is somewhat true of any school board which has an experienced and strong chairman.

The Study Group believes that a reduction in the power and detailed involvement of the chairman, which arise from the nature of his appointments, should now be made, and that these should move to some extent in the direction of the board and of the professional and executive staffs according to their appropriateness.

In making the above recommendation, the Study Group wishes to make it clear that no aspersions are cast on the incumbent. The circumstances leading to the present arrangements are understood but the time has come to discontinue them.

Should, however, the position of full-time chairman be continued, he should reside at headquarters and have his only office there. It is believed that there have been, and inevitably will be, instances of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing, when administrative decisions are made when others who ought to be party to them, either in an executive sense, or for information, are far away.

The Group would apply the same residence requirement to the superintendent of schools. It is recognized that unusual circumstances

currently exist, and that there were reasons for not proceeding with the appointment of a permanent superintendent pending the submission of this report. Hence, no fault is found with the seconding of Department of Education personnel to this position on an interim basis. In fact, the Study Group was involved in the decision to continue this arrangement temporarily.

Regarding the Departmental representation on the board, there is perhaps, something less than solid conviction. If the superintendent were still (on a permanent basis) an employee of the Department of Educaiton this might be deemed to be sufficient. It is concluded that reversion to that arrangement cannot be recommended. That being the case, and having regard to the fact that the division is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, financially dependent upon the Government, it is not unreasonable for there to be a government presence, in very small minority. Appointment to this place on the board should be made with much care. Insofar as it may be possible in one person, the appointee should have both an educational and a financial interest. His presence should not be, or appear to be, only one of clutching the purse strings.

4. There should be developed a local and regional representative structure designed to provide for more liaison between the board and the communities served, and which would also be a training and selection agency for the identification and naming of candidates for appointment to the board. It should lead to the eventual establishment of a fully elected board. The features of this structure should be as follows:

a) In association with each school operated by Northland and each community, such as Susa Creek, Muskeg River, and Anzac, from which a considerable number of pupils are transported to schools of other jurisdictions, there should be established a local school committee having a membership of three or five members. This committee, in most communities, would be elected annually at a public meeting. The calling of such a meeting, which would serve an additional function of providing an opportunity for a general review of school affairs, should be by the committee itself with the initiative being taken by the division in the first instance, or when there is default. One or more persons from the division should be available to attend committee meetings occasionally and especially on request;

b) Each school committee would name a school representative, who most frequently might be its chairman. In the case of communities with large schools, say in excess of 150 pupils enrolled, two representatives might be named;

c) At least twice a year the school representatives of each subdivision would gather, at the expense of the division, for a meeting with trustees and officers of the division for a discussion of local and divisional affairs;

d) Once a year the school representatives would be assembled for a meeting of all of them at divisional headquarters;

e) When a vacancy is about to occur affecting a subdivision, the regional group of representatives would be invited to put forward the name of a person, not necessarily one of themselves, to be named to the board. The Minister, while not obliged to name such a person, might be expected to do so except in unusual circumstances.

Regarding the local school committee structure proposed, the Study Group is aware of a number of difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, while accepting that the main function of the division is to provide schooling as effectively as it can, it also believes that an important and necessary function is to increase and develop local awareness and to foster involvement in democratic processes. This is what the structure

is designed to achieve.

The Study Group is aware that the division has taken occasional steps in the direction of local school committees. The Group, however, found that in very few communities was there any semblance of such an organization. There seems to have been limited divisional support and encouragement.

How can such committees be made viable? Universal success may be too much to expect, but it would appear that some degree of success can be attained if the following conditions are met:

a) The committee has some functions which are meaningful in a specific sort of way;

b) The committee has occasional and significant contact with representatives of the division who seek their advice and who bring to them significant information of a local or general nature;

c) The committee has some financial involvement and discretion.

While the Study Group was not in Manitoba and Saskatchewan long enough to have any actual contact with their local committee structure, there seemed to be little doubt that such committees were quite active, and numerous. Speaking of them jointly and without detailing specifically as to province, they

a) assume some responsibilities such as the development of school grounds;

b) have access to a sum of money, related to school size, which they expend entirely on their own, sometimes used for items under a), to subsidize school tours, or to contribute to some other school project;

c) participate in selection of school staff, especially principals. Prospective principals may be taken in to meet the school committee, or alternatively the committee, or a member thereof, might come out to take part in an interview.

It is difficult to identify the factors leading to the apparent greater success of the local school committee structures in these provinces. They seem to be, essentially, more recognition, more involvement, more frequent contact with the school system.

In both provinces there is on staff an officer, both of native ancestry, whose sole, or at least major, function is to keep in contact with local school committees, encouraging them, meeting with them, providing them with information. At first glance one is disposed to ask whether this is not a function which could be exercised by the superintendent's staff. It would, however, likely be a case of what is everybody's business being nobody's business.

It is our opinion that if the task of setting up a structure of active local committees is to be pursued vigorously, Northland must also have such a person. He should be conversant with the native situation and have skills in interpersonal and intercultural relationships. He should have a status position in the division's administration.

When a local committee meets, (especially in its formative stages) there would commonly be with it one or more of the subdivisional trustee, the local committee expediter, and someone from the staff of the superintendent. If and when the local structure becomes strong and effective, the services of the special officer might become redundant.

In the view of the Group, each committee should have, upon application to the division being satisfied that it has been properly chosen and responsibly organized, a sum of money under its autonomous jurisdiction. For a start it is recommended that this be a minimum of $300,

graduated upwards in relation to size of school.

Where in the community there operate school lunch programs, or early childhood education programs, both of which call for a local committee, the school committee, if acceptable to the community, might assume these functions thereby reducing the number of meetings, increasing the scope and importance of the committe, and effecting coordination.

One question arising was as to whether the members of local committees should receive honoraria for attendance at meetings, and if so, whether from their own allocated funds, which would necessitate a larger allocation, or from the division on certification of attendance at such meetings. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, no honoraria are paid, at least for locally held meetings.

The Study Group is of the view that school representatives should have a modest honorarium as well as expenses for attendance at regional and divisional meetings.

Initially the Group was unsure about recommending honoraria for local meetings. It was assumed that these would be of relatively short duration, probably held in the evening and hence not interfere with any vocational activities. It was learned, however, that the local committees set up in connection with the Community Vocational Centres operated by the Department of Advanced Education are paid honoraria, currently $15 for an evening and $25 for an all-day meeting. Since some of these function in Northland communities, it would be inconsistent for two contradictory practices to prevail.

The Advisory and Consultative Committee recommended payment of honoraria, partly on grounds that it is inevitable that certain more capable members of the community find themselves serving their communities in a variety of capacities which in their totality interfere considerably with their vocations and their personal activities. An interesting question is as to whether the local school principal should be a member of the committee, or at least an ex-officio participant in its meetings. Most items under consideration would involve his school and profit from his advice. The Study Group is disposed not to suggest legislation in this respect rather leaving it to the good judgement of those concerned to involve him as useful or required.

There arises the question as to what should be the nature of legislation bearing on the matter of school committees and school representatives. There is the further question as to who should be entitled to participate in the annual meeting in any particular community, to be elected to the school committee, and to be a school representative.

The Study Group is disposed not to recommend a highly structured and defined set of legal provisions and requirements. It considers that it would suffice to leave much, as is the case in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, to the school division to organize and administer, having regard to varying circumstances in different communities. The Act might only provide that it is incumbent on the division to promote and organize local school committees and to arrange for meetings of representatives from the communities served.

The defining of an electorate would be difficult. It is considered that when public meetings are called and advertised, it is highly improbable that persons will attend who are not reasonably bona fide residents of the area or community served. In case of any sort of dispute or complaint, the division would have to have power to investigate and take such remedial action as appears warranted.

For the reason that they do not seem to fall logically in any other chapter the following items are dealt with here.

One of the alleged faults, or weaknesses, of the division's operations is a lack of communication. The isolation of the communities and staffs in relation to head office leads to suspicion, often quite unjustified. What are they doing? What goes on? The Study Group considers that it would have a salutary effect if copies of the board's minutes went to each school for the information of the teaching staffs and of the community school committees when they exist. Minutes should be drafted with such distribution in mind.

Neither The School Act nor the Northland School Division Act imposes an obligation on the division to prepare an annual report nor to submit such a document to the Department of Education. To prepare one with some degree of comprehension would entail considerable effort. On the other hand such a document, comprising both statistical and narrative details, would provide immediately some degree of educational stocktaking, and from year to year a basis for comparisons, and a ready source of reference when trends and developments are under review. It would also serve as a basis for better comprehension within the Department of Education, to which a copy would go, of the processes and activities of the division. This should be useful at budget scrutiny time. It is recommended that the submission of an annual report to the Minister be a statutory requirement and that it be available on request to persons wishing to examine it.

CHAPTER SIX

## Curriculum

The subjects which chiefly arose in presentations made to the Study Group or in discussions with teaching staffs, and residents of the communities visited were:

a) the appropriateness of the Alberta program of studies, which is the basic program made available to the schools and which they are expected to follow, together with the books and texts approved for use in Alberta schools;

b) the question as to whether there might not be made available additional "practical" subjects or experiences;

c) the extent to which the historical, traditional and current cultures of native peoples might be incorporated into school programs;

d) the extent to which the native language, usually Cree but Chipewyan in a few cases, should be given some prominence in the programs of the schools.

In respect of each of these it must first be said that there is a great danger in generalization. The communities served by Northland vary greatly from one another in terms of accessibility, involvement with the larger society, in school experiences of the adult community, in terms of languages spoken, and in community attitudes towards education and other matters. What is appropriate, or necessary, in one situation may not be appropriate or necessary in another. There must be some evaluating of the circumstances in each case, something not readily or effectively done by teaching staffs new to the division and new to their schools.

This was recognized by the Northland School Division Study Committee of 1969, which on page 13 of its report said, "The problems in each of the Northland schools are very diversified and no one program can accommodate the students in all of the schools". It goes on to say, "New and/or inexperienced teachers do not feel free to adapt the standard curriculum to the pupils". The situation appears not to have changed in the intervening years.

a) The Alberta Program

The attitude of the Divisional Board is that the educational program of Northland's schools should not be inferior to that of other Alberta schools. It is a logical step from this view to say that the basis of the schools' programs should be the Alberta curriculum and its associated teaching materials including books.

The fact is that, in general, the level of the accomplishment of Northland pupils is low. When one looks at a number of factors there is an inevitability about this and an impossibility of identifying the degree of influence of the various factors. These are especially:

1. That a large number of pupils come to school with no knowledge of the English language, in which they will shortly be taught, or if they have some knowledge of English it is of inferior quality. Pupils in these categories have a built-in handicap of very serious proportions;

2. That few of the homes have books, games, the stimulation of conversation in English, or other reinforcements of the dominant language, which while not universally present in non-native homes, are on average much more so. The Study Group did not make personal examination in these respects but accepts the word of teachers and others who have had much opportunity for direct observation;

3. That the attendance levels are low, often hovering about the 60% range. Children

cannot be taught, and cannot learn what the school has to offer if they are not at school;

4. That native children, perhaps reflecting their traditional cultural patterns, do not readily enter into conversation or discussion with their teachers. The stimulating of vocabulary development, of language structure, and of breadth of knowledge that come from such exercises in most classrooms are subject to severe limitation;

5. That there are social, cultural and economic circumstances and influences which are not supportive of the school and which may require, in relation to the school, some ambivalence of attitude and behavior on the part of the pupils;

6. That there are also the factors, mentioned on several occasions in this report of the curriculum itself and of the teaching staff. The former tends to be rather rigidly the same as is to be found in Alberta schools generally and not accommodated to the special conditions prevailing in and about the school. The teaching staff is frequently inappropriately assigned and not able to adapt or develop more suitable materials and methods.

Such factors as these make it dangerous to attribute lack of progress to any particular factor, and one must always caution that generalization may overlook the many exceptions, pupils who do well despite handicaps.

It is believed that most children would do somewhat better if the materials available to them, and to their teachers, had a setting and background more related to their local environments rather than being related so universally to urban living.

It was hoped that in its travels and in its visits to schools the Group would find such materials, either commercially procured or prepared by teachers for their own use. In both respects there was disappointment. Practically nothing is being used in Northland schools, or is to be found on their shelves, of a distinctive nature.

This suggests that such materials are not readily available commercially. The market is small; production costs are high. Here and there work is being done but there seems to be little coordination or gathering together of it.

Once again reference must be made to the effects of teacher turnover. New, inexperienced, short-term, teachers have not the experience, the time, or the incentive to develop innovative materials.

At Yellowknife the Study Group saw the extensive work being done there in the production of materials for Indian and Eskimo schools. It did not, except for Rae-Edzo, have opportunity to see schools in operation, using the materials. They appeared to meet the objection of non-familiarity with which ordinary books and teaching materials are charged.

The Study Group examined the work being done at the Grade 1 level by the Curriculum Development Group on the grounds of Garneau School in Edmonton. Actual classroom use alone can determine the effectiveness of the materials produced, and the degree of their local relevance. The attempt being made is commendable. If successful the project should move upwards into other grades.

There has been some discussion as to whether the program should be suspended for a year during which time it would be tried out in the schools or whether it should, concurrent with tryout, be continued into grade II.

The Study Group would not be averse to seeing the project continue upwards but has some sympathy for the apparent point of view of the Board that before going further the materials

so far produced should be tested in actual classroom use. What is most important in the Group's view, is that the classroom use should be made as effective as possible. It is understood that some supervisory and consultative assistance is being arranged. This is good. It would be a pity, and a waste, the preparatory work having been done, to have the materials fall by the wayside due to failure to effect good conditions for their tryout.

The Group, admittedly on limited observation and discussions, formed the opinion that there was a lack of liaison and dialogue between the curriculum group and the division's administrators. Physical separation may have been a factor. If and when this or any similar project is further activated placement should be at or near headquarters or in association with a Northland school.

In the matter generally as to whether there should be some continuing curriculum development taking place in and for Northland Division the Study Group has some ambivalence. The division's problems are of like kind to those faced by other jurisdictions in Alberta and beyond, especially in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In so far as planning and development take place in a central agency, a curriculum center, it could surely serve a much larger constituency than Northland. The Alberta Department of Education might well be a focal point as far as Alberta is concerned.

Indian and Metis organizations have an interest in these matters and should play some part in any developments that might take place.

Just as this report was completed there was released an entirely new document sponsored jointly by the Alberta Department of Education and the Summer Temporary Employment Program. It is titled Natives of North America, a Selected Bibliography for Native Studies Programs. It lists, and annotates, a great variety of books, periodicals, and multi-media materals. It should prove to be of great value to curriculum development personnel and classroom teachers who are searching for sources of materials.

Within the supervisory staff proposed in chapter 10 is an assistant superintendent, instruction. One of his functions should be to develop, with additional help as required, some guide or package which should be in every school, related to the various grades, giving to teachers some direct and practical instructions and guidance relative to the adaptation of the standard Alberta program to the Northland situation. Materials complementing such instructions and guidance should gradually be developed. All of these should be of special help to the teachers newly arrived on staff. The facilitators referred to elsewhere in this report should be competent to assist teachers in following and applying such guidance.

What the division needs is not so much a curriculum center as a stimulating supervisory staff in close contact with teachers.

With respect to the basic readers being used there were varying degrees of enthusiasm about the Ginn series, which appeared to be the one chiefly in use. In the absence of some quite distinctive series, of which no samples were seen, objection is not taken to the books now being used. If more suitable can be found by all means use them.

The group was informed by some teachers that the children get along reasonably well to about the end of Grade III. Vocabulary extension is limited through these grades. Once Grade IV is entered the readers extend vocabulary rapidly in terms of numbers of words and in the inclusion of abstract ideas. It was informed that for a large number of native children it is impossible to keep up.

The dilemma faced as a result of the above described situation is as to whether easier

materials should be found and used, even though not of a standard or universal Grade IV level, or whether, in the interest of giving a true Grade IV experience the pupils should be expected to struggle with the regular program. Either way leads to a problem down the road.

To be expected to do the impossible leads only to frustration, dislike of school, absenteeism, and eventual dropout. To continue to use materials of a level below those normal for the age of the pupil means that eventually he is faced with the fact that although he has been at school for six, seven or eight years he is not really at, or near, the presumed level of accomplishment for his age. There seems to be a kind of dishonesty about this.

It is considered that having regard to the several handicaps under which the average native pupil experiences school, an English language oriented school, it is inevitable that he will be grade-retarded in some measure. It is best that the program to which he is exposed be kept at the level of his accomplishment rather than being beyond it to the degree that he is inevitably a failure. This will require guidance, assistance and policy at the divisional level, and study, adaptation and innovation at the local school level. The question will be returned to in the chapter on pupils.

An important and difficult question is that of local acceptance and attitude. It is natural that parents should hope and expect that their children will move through the grades normally in relation to other schools. The Study Group believes that under present circumstances this cannot be for large numbers of pupils. If, as is urged, some slower rate of progress through the grades, as normally thought of, should be systematically organized for many schools and pupils, a program of parental information leading to the acceptance of the facts of life, school life, will be necessary. If the parents will not accept them the school system will be faced with a problem of considerable magnitude and may not be able to [illegible]hat, taking the long range view, seems to be best to do.

What is suggested is the continued use of the Alberta program as the basis of the schools' work, that the pace be slower for large numbers of pupils, that there be both system and local adaptation of materials to make them more relevant to the immediate locale.

Occasionally it was stated to the Study Group that there is needed a quite different sort of education in Northland's schools to reduce the extent of retardation and drop-out in the upper elementary and junior high school grades. It was alleged that the school program is uninteresting, irrelevant, and frustrating to large numbers of pupils. If the educational diet were, on the contrary, interesting, relevant and satisfying, progress and persistence would improve.

There is not the slightest doubt that if such a program could be instituted, presuming that it had educative value and were not merely frivolous, it would be advantageous.

Unfortunately, attempts at particularization, as to just what the content and procedures of such a program would be, usually led to rather nebulous descriptions. The work of the 1974-75 curriculum group, its try-out and its appraisal in 1975-76, might be thought of as a step in this direction.

It is worth being reminded that the disabilities of Northland's schools are also to be found in the schools of the general society. It is a matter of degree. In those schools, and more especially in certain urban or other so-called depressed areas, are to be found children whose progress is poor, who experience home environments not supportive of schooling, whose school attitudes leave much to be desired and who look forward to the day when they can

leave school. School systems, despite long years of experimentation, have found no real solutions to this problem.

At the high school level the '50's saw a great interest in diversification of programs, the provision of expensive vocational facilities and much propagandizing for enrolment of pupils in programs appropriate to their interests and capacities. While it would be quite wrong to say that these developments were a failure, nevertheless they have not achieved the goal, by a wide margin, of producing schools of contented, highly motivated students. Academic education is still honored above other kinds. Students, abetted or pushed by their parents, still pursue programs beyond their capacities in which they have little interest and from which they derive little positive result.

So it seems to be in Northland. The feeling gained by the Study Group is that even if some more appropriate curriculum could be found it would not likely be accepted by the parents of the children without considerable persuasion. It would be regarded as something somehow smacking of discrimination.

Mention was made in the Advisory and Consultative Committee of "community action" programs. The concept here is that the local school staff, assisted by counsellors, resource persons, from central staff or elsewhere, and in close consultations with local residents, would develop a program which would have greater relevance, interest and success. Involvement of the community is essential, both to provide useful input and to achieve acceptability.

The Study Group is fully sympathetic to any such efforts. It believes, as was stated in the committee, that centrally designed and imposed programs of alleged relevance are likely to have minimal success.

In the report of the Commission on Educational Planning (the Worth Report), 1972, there appears in a very short statement on "Native Peoples" this sentence from page 160: "Work is already underway in the Northland School Division on the development of comparative cultural units that relate the problems of native minorities in Alberta to similar problems that occur in other cultures." How serious and extensive this work was seems now difficult to determine. Some materials came into the schools, some attempts were made to use them, but three years later they are forgotten nor is any evidence of their use to be seen in the schools.

Here again we come to the essential factor of continuity. The implementation of a community action program is contingent upon planning over a period of time, upon extensive community involvement, and must be in effect over a period of years. How is this possible when staffs are so transitory in relation to their schools? Both continuity of staff and of parental involvement and understanding are necessary for any such project or program to succeed.

b) Practical Subjects

Considerable desire was found for a greater availability of activities which commonly go under the headings of home economics and industrial arts. These were offered in 1974-75 at Mistassiniy, Grouard and Jean D'Or. Service at Janvier was in prospect. Fort Chipewyan pupils were being accommodated at Bishop Piche School. Especially was it urged that these not be delayed until Grade VII where they normally commence.

The Study Group has some sympathy for this point of view. Many of the pupils, for reasons which have been indicated above, have difficulty in school at intellectual or abstract levels, at least in English. English language competence, for one thing, is not adequate. Further, at current levels of prospect of life style and employment, a variety of manual and technological

skills would be an asset. Any program involving people must begin where they are. There is nothing to be gained by setting impossible goals. Levels of aspiration and accomplishment can be periodically raised as the dominant language foundation itself rises.

The inherent problems are recognized. Schools are small. Facilities are limited. Staffs are busy with what they currently have to do. They may have no competence to get involved in crafts and manual skills.

Whatever is done should be simple, and should relate to the local scene. The outboard and snowmobile motor has now entered most communities. Its maintenance is important. Instruction in its operation, eccentricities, adjustment and repair is very relevant. Sewing, mending, cooking and other domestic skills and information need to be geared to the local home scene.

To the extent that such can be done having regard to the practicalities of space, equipment and personnel the Study Group would like to see some addition to the practical experiences of the pupils. There is the hope that in addition to learning some immediately usable skills there will be some increment in the direction of acceptance of school by the senior elementary pupils.

As with so many of Northland's problems, or its aspirations, the limitations loom large. Schools are small. It is impossible to provide shop and home economics facilities and staff for each. The best that can be recommended are:

1. That some generosity and flexibility be accepted as necessary to improve the offerings; and

2. That any principal, teacher or staff that exhibit a readiness to experiment with or to program practical subjects, and who have some competence, be encouraged by way of the provision of what is needed to pursue the experiment or program.

The recruitment of local persons to assist, in cooperation with the teacher, has been frequently referred to. This would be commendable. The extent and feasibility of use of this source is really unknown. It seems to have been rarely used in Northland. Community rapport and involvement seem to be a requisite for the pursuit of this resource. If something more than casual participation develops provision should be made for some remuneration. It is conceivable that an occasional person may be found who could be used in several schools, or in materials development. Some program of seeking out, and even training such persons, should be pursued.

c) Native Culture

It has frequently been stated that schools having children of Indian origin should provide greater opportunity for them to learn about, and perhaps to some extent function in, aspects of their own culture.

In this respect the Study Group wishes to make it clear that it favors the doing of anything which will enhance the self-image of native children, and is opposed to anything which might tend to develop feeling of inferiority, inadequacy or loss of dignity.

When consideration is given to native culture it seems to have a number of components:

a) the history of the North American Indian, and especially of the Indians of Northern Alberta;

b) the beliefs, life-styles, art forms, occupations and characteristics of community life of the Indian ancestors of the present native people in the area served by Northland;

c) the current cultures of the various communities in so far as they differ from those of the wider society, and have some degree of distinctiveness.

The Study Group interested itself in this subject in these ways:

a) by discussing it with the people who attended the public meetings in the communities, both in sessions and more informally when possible;

b) by discussing it with teaching staffs;

c) by noting the observations made by other interested persons;

d) by looking for instances in which the program of the school had in some way been adapted to include an Indian culture component;

e) by looking for books and materials which had some relevance to Indian culture and history.

Regarding the persons met and conversed with in the communities visited the Study Group had expected to hear some concern on their part that the schools were too white-society oriented and failed to take cognizance of native culture. This question almost never arose from the people themselves. When introduced into the subject matter of the meetings it seldom evoked any response. The Study Group was forced to the conclusion, through the discussion of various aspects of school programs and operation, that the great majority of Northland's parents and others interested in the schools wanted an effective basic program of what is commonly referred to as the Three R's carried forward in an atmosphere of good pupil control, in other words, a somewhat traditional view of schools and schooling.

Two simple illustrations will serve to elaborate, one from very early in the Group's visits, and one very late. At Garden Creek, a very isolated Indian community, the people were asked, through an interpreter, what they considered to be the most important thing for their children to be taught, or to be in the school program. After some discussion in their native language, the simple reply was given, English. At Loon Lake where the discussion was conducted chiefly in English with occasional translation into Cree, the question was asked as to whether there was interest in having some or more, history of Indian peoples included in the school program. One participant asked, "What history, General Custer?" which evoked a considerable merriment but effectively brought discussion of the subject to an end.

In a few instances there was noted some doing of bead work, introduced by teachers on their own initiative who deemed it to be an Indian art form that their children might learn as a cultural component of historical interest or as a surviving and possibly useful craft. At one public meeting it was the subject of criticism on the grounds that it was occupying an excessive amount of time to the detriment of the more important aspects of the school program. With this the Study Group was, from its own observation, inclined to agree. Perhaps if the instruction had been given by a mature, competent, native person, at scheduled times, the reaction might have been different.

With respect to learning and performing skills that no longer have much in the way of immediate relevance the attitude of native people is perhaps not different from any other. White children are occasionally enabled to churn butter or perform some other function of "the olden days" which although regarded as interesting is not really seen as having a high level rating educationally.

The conclusion simply is that no significant interest was found at the community level in developing native culture programs in the

schools. As noted elsewhere there was interest in some "practical" subjects, related to the current and immediate lives and livelihoods of the communities.

Teachers did not have a great deal to say on the subject. The section on Curriculum in the brief of the Northland School Division Local of The Alberta Teachers Association contains no observation on this subject. The nearest that it comes to it is a recommendation that there be an Outdoor Education Program of canoeing, camping, snowshoeing and skiing, thereby bringing the children into closer relationship with the outdoor environment which surrounds them. The Study Group looks favorably on such programs. Not only do these activities involve considerable native technology, they should also serve to give the pupils a greater appreciation of the environment of which they are part.

The Study Group equally commends the efforts being made in some communities and by some school staffs to organize tours which give their children an opportunity to visit and see some of the larger world, one into which many will ultimately seek admission.

It seemed to be generally agreed by teachers and others that it would be good for native children to have a positive view of their Indian ancestry but that this lies not so much in the development of particular programs or program adaptations as in an attitude towards and recognition of things Indian as being of interest and importance. Again it has to be asked as to how this can be done by an impermanent teaching staff coming without knowledge or understanding, inadequate to improvise, to adapt and to achieve rapport, and leaving before these capacities are developed.

The Study Group, with regret, has to say that it observed few attempts to incorporate aspects of Indian culture, historical or current, in the school programs. True, visits to classrooms were short but rarely was anything observed in progress or by way of illustrative material that indicated any interest in or concern about this matter.

How far a school should go in basing its total program on native culture is an unresolved and controversial question. As is said later in respect of the Cree language it cannot and should not go in this direction beyond the wishes of the community. Nevertheless it is considered that there should be a greater recognition of the native component in the antecedents of the school population.

If such programs are developed they might best, as indicated elsewhere in this chapter, be locally conceived and designed. There should be a sort of local option in the matter, community and school working together.

The Rae-Edzo school in the Northwest Territories is described elsewhere in this report. The school is operated under a locally elected school board, all but one of whom are native. It was intended to be, in part, a structure which would, or could, lead to a closer relationship between school and the aspirations and desires of the native community. The Study Group's observation, based on a day's visit, was to the effect that after several years of native control school operation and program were essentially traditional. The use of open area teaching space while seemingly well effected was much as might be found in any modern school. Two native women were in the school engaged in bead-work which they taught on occasion to the pupils. Some snowshoes were in evidence which had been made by pupils under the direction of a resident of the community. A caribou hunt had been organized in which older boys participated. It was a success in that a large number of caribou had been taken but admittedly there was some artificiality about the operation, including an air flight of 200 miles to reach a herd. There was some question as to whether the project would be repeated. A fishing project was in contemplation.

A difficulty obviously is to find projects or programs that are interesting, meaningful and truly representative of native culture, to be handled by or in the school. It is of interest to note that two teachers of the school have asked for leave of absence and financial support in order to spend a year among the Dogrib people, especially in more remote places, in order to develop curriculum and illustrative materials that might be useful in the schools. The outcome of this request is not known.

Again it is concluded, in the absence of any programs being in evidence that appear clearly to be of distinct value in relation to understanding and appreciation of native culture, that any success will reside in the attitude of the school and teacher and the achieving of some rapport between school and community.

From time to time there was encountered the suggestion, but seldom the actuality except at Rae-Edzo, of bringing into the school elders or other persons from the community to talk to the children, to demonstrate something, or to teach a skill having some relevance to Indian culture, past or present. Full support is given to this sort of rapport with the community, not only for the specific task undertaken, but as a means of keeping school and community a bit more on speaking terms.

Regarding books the number in evidence bearing on Indians to be found in the schools is very small indeed. Most of these have been written without any school or any school-age children in mind and would equally be found in the libraries of schools generally.

The Rae-Edzo school has a large library and a full-time librarian. Its supply of books about Indians is also small, in a setting where no doubt effort has been made to find and purchase such books. An interesting observation made by the librarian was that she had noted no special interest on the part of native pupils in books about Indians or Indian life. Their attitude towards such books was, as far as she could see, no different from their attitude towards books about Dutch children, Arab children or any others. They were just books about people.

The Northwest Territories Department of Education has produced some books and materials designed to be more native culture oriented. The Study Group was not able to ascertain the actual impact of these in the schools but they did appear to be a step in a positive direction.

d) The Native Language

In this section, to achieve brevity, the word Cree will be consistently used. In a few Northland communities the native or ancestral language is Chipewyan. In relation to such communities the word Chipewyan should be read for Cree.

Any discussion of this subject in relation to schools and communities must take cognizance of the fact that there are communities comprised of people of native ancestry in which Cree is in general use as the language of every day communication and from this through a spectrum to those in which English is now the language in general use. In such communities a few elderly people may be Cree speakers but the knowledge of that language is minimal among the children.

No generalization is applicable to all the schools of the spectrum.

Eliminated from this discussion are the schools serving non-native populations, Menno-Simons, Zama City and Brewster's Camp which have been recommended for transfer to other jurisdictions.

The question of the Cree language and its relationship to the school was raised at all meetings where the native population was dominant. Seldom, if at all, was it raised by the people

themselves.

Factually, it may be noted that the Division has made, or is making, the following provisions:

1. Every school, where appropriate, including even the one-room school at Nose Creek, has been supplied with a teacher aide. In a few instances where the school is large, two are provided. Each teacher aide is recruited locally, speaks Cree, and is known to the children. Her, occasionally his, function is to assist the Grade I teacher by serving as an interpreter, performing routine functions, telling stories in Cree and generally assisting the children to become at home in school, to develop concepts of a simple nature, and to commence an understanding of English.

The Study Group found universal support for this program among the people. Admittedly, local tensions, lack of competence or assiduity sometimes rendered the assistance less than fully effective, but on the whole the Study Group was favorably impressed by the calibre of teacher aides. It is to be hoped that some of these can be encouraged to pursue teacher education, especially through some of the university associated programs now being developed and be enabled to make even greater contributions as certificated teachers.

2. A few larger schools have attached to them somewhat similar persons termed counsellor aides. These persons, Cree speaking, known in the community, assist the principal and staff in effecting liaison with the community and in dealing with specific problems. They serve as attendance officers, not in a legal sense, but in an investigative and persuasive sense.

The Study Group had little occasion to see these officers of the school in action but met them and were generally favorably impressed. It was again aware of problems of local tension and lack of competence in some cases but this is inherent in the total setting. The principals of the schools, in most cases, found their counsellor aides to be of considerable advisory and executive support in problem cases.

3. Recently, supported in part by special funds from a Department of Education program, the division has instituted an Early Childhood Services program.

The term kindergarten can be legitimately applied to the service. A special classroom has been provided, usually a mobile building, in which the children four and one-half years and up, but not yet in school, are assembled for a half-day under the direction and tutelage of a local person, again someone who would qualify as a teacher aide. The program is designed to develop a sort of school orientation, to give the children a modicum of intellectual experience, and to give them a bit of contact with English. The total program is under the supervision and development of a staff officer of the division.

It is intended to extend this activity, which is much praised by the people, to all appropriate schools in the division.

Cree is, of course, the language of the E.C.S. classes to the extent that it is the language of the children who are enrolled.

From the above it will be seen that considerable effort, and expenditure, have been made to assist the children entering school to effect a transition from Cree to English. The transition is far from complete, very much so, at the end of Grade 1 but the E.C.S. program and the teacher aide program very much ease the otherwise traumatic experience of being thrust into an English speaking milieu with no preparation at all. Since the E.C.S. program has only begun it is too early to assess its effect, but it must surely be positive.

A further fact that may well be mentioned

and which must be taken into consideration when certain proposals are under consideration is the lack of availability of teachers who know and speak Cree. The Study Group saw only one, perhaps two, as of September 1974. A number of programs, which will be referred to elsewhere, are under way with a view to increasing the numbers of young people of native ancestry in teacher education programs. The numbers of candidates are as yet small. Four years of education for certification are required, although some proposals for an earlier interim certification are under discussion. Their services will be in demand not only for Northland but for many native enrolment schools. Many have as their native language one other than Cree. Finally, when certificated they are free to teach in any Alberta school and there is no assurance that they will seek employment in native schools. In fact, it is probably true that an extensive period in a university-urban environment may make service in isolated Northland schools somewhat less than attractive. Returning to a native community as a quasi or integrated member of the white or wider society is fraught with its own problems.

The prospect is that there will be very few Cree speakers available to serve in Northland schools for the foreseeable future.

Consideration of Cree in schools leads to a looking at it from at least three points of view:

1. If Cree is the language of a community, that is in regular use in the homes and in social intercourse, ought it not to be recognized by the school and an attempt made to give to the pupils a better understanding of it, to improve their use of it, and to enable them to read and write it? The Study Group has no knowledge of Cree though reading has revealed some of the compositional and grammatical differences between it and English, differences which inevitably are reflected in word order and other respects when the pupil begins to converse in English. This is equally true of persons whose native tongue is German, Japanese or almost any other.

There is Cree, inferior Cree, good Cree and superior Cree, just as with any other language. Should not the school help Cree speakers to use their own language better?

2. A second consideration is that of the efficacy of the use of the native language in enhancing school learning in general and the learning of English in particular.

It is argued that the Cree speaker, despite an Early Childhood year and the presence of a teacher aide who speaks Cree, is really not able to understand school and schooling in the English language. If he is taught in Cree for perhaps three years, with English being taught and experienced as a second language, school can be a happier, more acceptable place. There can be more successes and more understanding of new ideas whether of number, of general information, or the whole range of things in which young children are expected to be interested.

The proponents of this view also contend that English will ultimately be more effectively learned if seriously attacked at a later age and based on a more advanced and satisfying school experience.

3. Thirdly, there is the situation in which Cree has practically ceased to be the language of the community, or at least of its younger members. The same sort of concern is felt by some members of the community that part of their heritage is being lost as is felt by Alberta people of Ukrainian, German or other origin. Their concerns have led to the making available at the high school level, or even earlier, and at universities, courses in their languages designed on the one hand to provide an opportunity for a cultural experience, and on the other to achieve some perpetuation of the

language. Some groups organize their own Saturday morning or after school language classes.

It can be said, however, that out of the total population of the various such backgrounds a very small fraction demonstrate concern or interest, the vast number being satisfied to let their children join the English language culture and to lose contact with the language of their ancestors. Occasionally a voice was heard urging that Cree be made available in the school so that the children could have some knowledge of their heritage, a kind of sentimental concern. Mention was made also of the fact that there is need for Cree speakers to work in a great many programs and activities, governmental and otherwise, which operate in or in relation to Cree speaking communities. We shall now look further at each of these.

Once again reference is made to the public meetings and community contacts. At every meeting, except in white communities, the question of Cree in relation to the school was raised. The people were asked, especially, whether they wanted their children to learn more and better Cree, and whether they were concerned about the possibility of Cree falling into disuse as it obviously had done, or was in the process of doing, in some communites.

In asking these questions the Study Group felt some sense of guilt in that it knew that teachers were not available to perform the teaching function.

The fact was, however, that rarely was there any positive response or expressed concern, even in solidly Cree speaking communities. On the contrary it was regularly stated, in effect, that the children learn Cree at home and that they go to school to learn English.

It may be noted that no longer are there prohibitions about speaking Cree on the playground, or in school if pupils must converse together. Consequently all degrees of polarity and of fusion as between Cree and English are heard.

The Study Group concluded that there is no strong demand for Cree in the schools in so far as the people are concerned. While not clearly articulated it seems that there is a feeling that the children must ultimately live in, or be involved with in various ways, an English speaking society and that they had better get on with the job of learning that language. What their reactions might be if teachers fluent in Cree were in their schools and made use of it for instructional purposes cannot be reliably conjectured.

As was stated earlier there was strong support for the E.C.S. and the teacher aide arrangements, both Cree related. Presumably these were seen as means of helping children to get used to school and to step at an early age into the learning of English.

Regarding the pedagogy of the three years or thereabouts in Cree as the language of instruction the Study Group was unable to find firm and unequivocal evidence that better results would be obtained. It would be pleased to see an attempt made to institute such a program experimentally.

It is forced to conclude, however, that in the absence of some very convincing public relations such a program would be opposed, even resented, in most Northland communities. The people do not want something different from what is available to other Alberta children. Unless very convincingly explained, such a program could well be interpreted as being somehow discriminatory.

As stated above, the absence of Cree speaking teachers defeats such a program in any event.

The Study Group arranged for a survey of

literature bearing on the place of a native language in school where the ultimate objective is fluency in the English language. This study was conducted by Dr. Douglas V. Parker, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. The report is in the files of the Study Group and would make interesting and valuable reading for anyone interested in the problem, and especially curriculum related officers of Northland.

This study stresses the need for community acceptance of any Cree language program. It quotes from a study made among Yuk Eskimos of Alaska where the reaction of Yuk parents was, "You teach them English; we'll teach them Yuk at home." The parents had to be persuaded that Yuk was not being "taught" in school but was being "used" in school to help teach English before an experiment could be launched. It was alleged by the researchers, based on subjective evaluations, that increased use of Yuk did contribute positively to school success.

The survey concludes by indicating that there is probably some advantage to conducting early schooling in the vernacular and regarding English as a second language.

In Northland, as indicated earlier, the E.C.S. program and the teacher aide program under which Cree-speakers do really start in Cree are a step in that direction, but hardly a full implementation of it.

Mention is here made of Northern Saskatchewan. The Department of Northern Saskatchewan employs a native language consultant and appears to have made some progress in making the native language more visible in some of the schools. Four schools currently offer a native language program in Grades I - III. Saskatchewan seems to have a larger number of Cree speakers available as teachers, and some use is made of local residents who come into the schools. The consultant stressed that instruction in Cree is not undertaken or introduced into any community without full consultation with the community and a request for it, presumably through the local school committee.

Should there be any thought of moving in the direction of more use and recognition of Cree in schools a more extensive look at the Saskatchewan program than the Study Group was able to undertake would be useful. Northern Saskatchewan, it may be observed, had decided to use alphabetics rather than syllabics as the basis of written Cree.

Finally, an observation about Cree in communities where it is no longer the language of the children when they enter school. The Study Group is quite sympathetic to some introduction of Cree to enable the pupils, somewhat older pupils, to learn something of their linguistic heritage. We doubt that any such program is likely to make them Cree speakers. The reinforcement through home and community will be minimal. The best that can be hoped for is that it can be so done that they have some understanding of the language and hopefully, some increased awareness of and pride in their antecedents.

Again, who will do the teaching? In the absence of Cree-speaking teachers and until such may be in larger supply we see as the only possibility the utilization of competent local talent.

CHAPTER SEVEN

## Pupils and Services

The special mandate of Northland Division is to provide schooling for children of native ancestry living in communities of varying degrees of isolation and of varying cultural components. Generalization may do violence to the facts in many instances. Hence whatever is said in a general way must be said with the caution that there are many, and varying degrees of, exceptions in respect of individuals and of communities.

In the discussion which follows the communities of Menno-Simons, Brewster's Camp and Zama are to be deemed to be excluded. These are non-native, English speaking communities. Their transfer to other jurisdictions has been recommended, as indicated in a later chapter.

Except for the schools in the communities referred to above, the pupils of the schools are entirely or substantially of native origin, by which is meant for present purposes that they are commonly referred to as Indian or Metis. Keg River has a considerable number of non-native children, several somewhat different sub-communities being served. Fort Chipewyan school serves a mixed population.

While the majority of the children are of native ancestry the present status of cultures and life-styles of their communities varies. Some have regular contact with and access to the wider society, such as Paddle Prairie along the MacKenzie Highway, and Grouard which is not far off Highway 2 and in constant contact with High Prairie and other centers of population. Contrast with these the communities of Garden Creek, Chipewyan Lakes and Fox Lake which are not accessible by road, except perhaps a winter road, or occasionally by four-wheel drive vehicle. Normal access for visitors to the schools and communities is by charter plane.

Nevertheless almost all the communities have a greater or lesser degree of self containment and have cultural and social structures which set them apart from the main streams of Alberta society.

Many schools serve both Indian and Metis pupils, the school being on or adjacent to an Indian reserve with substantial populations of Metis people nearby, or part of a total community. Examples are Atikameg, Janvier and Calling Lake.

The Study Group occasionally was informed of tensions between adults, Indian and Metis, but these, seemingly, do not penetrate seriously into the schools. The schools make no distinctions among pupils who become a single school family.

The most visible cultural characteristic is that of language. No figures are available but a very large percentage of pupils come to school with Cree, or in a small proportion of cases Chipewyan, as the mother tongue. Some have rudimentary knowledge of English and some speak English only. In the latter case, and here again the exceptions must be acknowledged, the quality of English leaves much to be desired in terms of vocabulary, grammatical correctness and fluency. It can be stated that in almost all, if not all, of Northland's schools English language deficiency is a factor which retards the pupils' progress and adds to the effort required of the teachers. This subject was further discussed in the chapter on curriculum.

A general characteristic of the pupils is a reticence or reluctance to speak, even within their level of competence. This was noted in observation of classrooms and was commented upon by teachers. Much teaching and learning in a usual Alberta classroom proceeds by way of question and answer and by discussion appropriate to the grade level and subject matter. There is a stimulation of thought to be derived

from this together with practice in vocabulary extension and in correct and effective language usage.

This is largely lacking in Northland schools, to the great detriment of the pupils' progress. Since the teachers understand and would normally use these and similar techniques it seems that the reason for their absence, or lack of response on the part of the pupils, must lie chiefly in characteristics of the pupils themselves. One may speculate on causes. Unfamiliarity with English, lack of confidence in its use, doubtless are factors, Is there a factor to fear? The Study Group saw no more evidence of lack of sympathy, among Northland's teachers than would be seen anywhere. Most teachers seemed to strive for rapport and intercommunication, but few have had training in inter-cultural education.

Is there something in the home culture, in the manner of language upbringing, that tends to develop in a child the tendency to give a minimum answer to a question, and to inhibit spontaneous observations? It has been found that native people do in fact communicate nonverbally to a greater extent than do those of the white society. This being the case it must be recognized by teachers as a cultural phenomenon, and taken into consideration.

The Study Group does not pretend to know the answer or causes. It observes that the situation exists. It is certain that it makes teaching and learning more difficult and less satisfying. Most unhappily it contributes to the slowing of accomplishment on the part of the pupil.. It is one of the chief arguments for a low pupil-teacher ratio, which enables the teacher to be somewhat more personal and individually encouraging in trying to effect more language response.

Most of the communities served by Northland have little in the way of economic base. Except in two or three places there is little farming. Occasionally one hears of some trapping but it is not a flourishing industry, though it may be intermittently profitable for an occasional individual. A bit of lumbering and milling is in evidence, though currently is in the doldrums. Casual employment is to be found in connection with petroleum developments, road construction, logging and other industries, construction and governmental activities. A number of projects under federal or provincial self-help programs provide occasional remunerative employment. The results of some of these were observed in unfinished and apparently abandoned state.

Many families receive social assistance. In some communities, however, very few families, perhaps only one, were in receipt of welfare. Nevertheless, despite all the above the economic status of most of the communities is low. Unhappily, excessive use of alcohol is a problem in some communities in varying degrees. This is not a school problem but it vitally affects the school in its efforts.

The Study Group is not competent to pass judgment on or make recommendations in respect of the social and economic problems, to the extent that they exist. It is firmly of the view, however, that the successes and failures of the schools cannot be judged in isolation as though by some changes or improvements in them some miracle can be expected in terms of pupil progress, important as such changes or improvements may be.

Without wishing unduly to stress the matter, or to suggest that such is the norm, one cannot but be conscious of such observations as that of a principal who advised that the school was having a bad day. There had been heavy drinking and general disturbance in the community throughout the night. The children had not had proper sleep, nor had they properly breakfasted.

The point of the above observations is to stress that the school is but one factor in the

total life of the child and that all that he is, does and experiences affects his progress. There was once current the expression, "The whole child goes to school," implying that much more than his intellectual capacity is a factor in his learning.

Some sort of concerted total community development program, or approach is necessary if there is to be a raising of various aspects of community life of which education is only one component.

Without undue moralizing, with full recognition of many exceptions, with awareness that the people of the communities themselves frequently suffer handicaps, nevertheless it must be realized that effective, improved progress of children at school must be a joint, in fact a triple, project of community, home and school. In a great many instances the home and community component must be improved as well as that of the school.

There were occasional reports of children coming to school with no or an inadequate breakfast. Too few homes make any provision for books, games or other forms of mental stimulation. Although locally useful skills may be favorably regarded, the Study Group is convinced that most Northland parents want their children to succeed in school, as they understand it, and as it substantially exists in Northland schools, but the perception that the Study Group has is that in far too many cases they do not work at, or reinforce, it from the home end to the extent that is really required.

But as is said elsewhere in this report many factors are interrelated. It is difficult to pursue activities that might be useful to school progress in a crowded housing situation. The attack needs to be on more than one front.

In any Northland community there are few adult models whose attainments have had a dependence upon schooling. Apart from the teachers, and occasionally a parish priest, there are few such career models, no range of persons occupying a spectrum of choices to emulate. Not to be aware of such, other than casually and through books and films, must reduce the probability of aspiration. On the other hand there may well be models within the community and its culture worthy of emulation from other viewpoints.

In this regard it was noted that some plans were afoot for tours of pupils to the outside, and that such tours had been arranged in the past. The Study Group looks on these with great favor as contributors not only to actual knowledge and understanding but also to the arousing of aspirations and motivations. In Manitoba the Study Group learned of a strong program of this sort. Northland does cooperate by making available school buses, including driver. The initiative in these respects is usually taken by the school principal with money being raised locally. Visits to other native communities, to projects and developments in which native peoples have participated, or to which they have given leadership should not be overlooked.

Some scheduling problems were brought to the attention of the Study Group and were discussed with divisional office personnel. No serious examination was made of the problems which have arisen. The Study Group wishes only to say that every effort should be made in this as in other matters to engage in the best possible communication so that teachers will feel that they have full support in their efforts, especially those over and above the call of duty.

One of the schools' most vexatious problems is that of attendance. The percentage varies from school to school and from grade to grade. The school registers, which were regularly examined, not infrequently showed attendance records of 60%. The poorest attenders, generally speaking, were the older pupils. The per-

centages are lowest in the fall and again in May-June. Divisional officers stated that these records show a slight but steady improvement over the years. There is still a long way to go.

At Garden Creek the question was raised as to whether some modification of the school year might be effected freeing children at certain times in the school year when traditional activities and occupations interfere with school attendance. This possibility was not seriously pursued by the Study Group but would bear some further study and examination by Northland.

The law of Alberta provides for the prosecution of parents who do not send their children to school regularly. Northland has found this to be an exercise in futility, and among other effects creates, or increases, the hiatus or lack of rapport between school and community. The present policy is, in effect, one of non-prosecution. The Study Group is disposed to accept this as the best policy for the time being.

Interesting sidelights in this regard turn up. For example, in a community where a Community Vocational Centre is operated by the Department of Advanced Education a mother enrols, and during the period of attendance receives an allowance. In order that she may attend an older girl is kept home to be with the pre-school children. Which is the greater good? From the school's point of view the girl who stays home is losing her education and is on the way to becoming a drop-out. It is difficult to apply the rules of urban middle class Alberta communities to situations of this sort.

The simple fact is that the school cannot teach a child who is not there; and if he is not there he contributes to his own problem of sequential learning. There is a kind of vicious circle. When he is away a pupil makes school less attractive for himself when he returns because he is behind. Then because school is less attractive he is frustrated and stays away more.

It is useless to say that the school is at fault in that it fails to make its program interesting and stimulating. To the extent that this can be done by system organization and supervision, or is done by teachers of special effectiveness, all praise and encouragement should be given. The fact is, however, that no school system has ever really achieved this goal. Some percentage of teachers will be of modest effectiveness. Better can be hoped for but there is not likely to be any sudden or rapid arrival at the ideal in Northland's schools with every school day being a pupil's delight.

Attendance in the generality of Alberta schools is significantly a function, mathematically speaking, of the home input, of aspirations, of control and insistence, of concern, of interest and encouragement. Where these are lacking poor attendance results whether in Northland or elsewhere.

Discussion of this problem with principals and staffs almost always led to the same conclusion. After allowance had been made for genuine illnesses and other excusable causes of absence there remained the large core of absentees who were away from school for frivolous reasons, or no reason at all, nothing much being done about it by the parents either at the time or when brought to their attention. The result is a frustration on the part of the school and ultimately a ceasing to try to do much about it.

This situation is commonly explained by saying that parents have a different attitude towards their children, one of greater permissiveness, less of telling or influencing them as to what they ought to do. If a child does not want to go to school that, essentially, is his own decision to make. It is true also that some native children still play a somewhat more

active role in the home and its economy than do most white children.

What can be done?

Obviously anything that makes school more attractive is salutory but, as indicated above, this is not to be expected to be a large factor; and anything that can be done to make learning easier, especially in relation to language competence will be useful, including early childhood services (kindergarten), teacher-aides, and better teaching techniques.

Largely it becomes a matter of changed parental and community attitude and of home reinforcement. There must first be an awareness that the home has a big role to play, without which school success is forever handicapped. Then there must be action.

If the local school committees recommended in the chapter on governance become effective they might be at least one vehicle leading to some improvement in the situation. It was reported to the Study Group that there has been a tendency recently, where local committees have been operative, or revived, for younger members of the community to be appointed to them, or to accept office. This would seem to be a good omen.

The division has in a few school paraprofessionals called counsellor-aides. These persons are intended to improve home-school and school-community relations. The Study Group was favorably impressed by some of them; not so impressed by others. One of their functions is checking up on absentees. They have no powers. Their roles sometimes seemed a bit ambiguous. Much depends on the individual personalities, and on the relationship with the principal. The Study Group had no means of assessing their work in action since this largely takes place out in the homes or elsewhere away from the school. The fact that they are locally resident seems to have some advantages, while at the same time may reduce their prestige and effectiveness in some cases. Generally principals spoke of this service favorably, but seldom enthusiastically. To what extent they actually improve school attendance remains unknown, but surely to some extent.

Reference is now made to the school lunch program. During the past year or two the provincial government has implemented a policy of providing a free school lunch service in what might be termed disadvantaged schools. It provides the necessary culinary and sanitary equipment, the salaries of a locally employed staff of two, and supplies of groceries needed. Because of the usual problems of distance and transportation the costs are quite high. Figures were not sought. An interview was held with the director of the program in the Department of Health and Social Development who described its nature and purposes. Primarily it is to improve nutrition and diet by providing a considerable and varied noon meal.

This program does not operate as part of the school. The school staffs are not involved other than marginally. An exception to this is at Cadotte Lake where the lunch is served in the school, on tables in the considerable hallway, where the teachers (2) sit with the children and assist in the marshalling and supervision. Elsewhere the program is offered in community halls, or similar facilities, where the necessary installations have been made. Supervision of the program is given under the auspices of a local committee, which is a part of the total administrative structure.

In the main the program seemed to be working well. The menus, centrally planned to accord with the flow of groceries to the operation, were very acceptable. The serving in all cases was done with reasonable regard to orderliness and decorum.

At Wabasca a team from the Department of Health and Social Development was making an

assessment of the health of the children through extensive measurements with a view to evaluating the effects of the program on health and growth. No results of the study were available at the time of this report.

The Study Group was pleased to see this program. In some instances the pupils much need the dietary supplement provided whether because of low level of income and of expenditure on food, or because of improper diet. Incidentally, lack of dental services is reported to be a serious matter in many communities, which is rather true of rural areas of Alberta generally.

Effects are very difficult to measure. In some places it was stated that school attendance had been improved partly due to better health and daily condition, and partly due to the attraction of the food, and perhaps the occasion; no school, no lunch.

Transportation of pupils is a considerable operation in Northland School Division. A number of situations are served:

a) the total number of pupils in a community are transported to a non-divisional school, as at Anzac and Susa Creek-Muskeg River;

b) the pupils from one settlement where no school is operated are transported to a divisional school, as in the case of Indian Cabins to Steen River and Carcajou to Keg River;

c) senior pupils, chiefly high school but also including some junior high, are transported to the school or schools of other jurisdictions from communities within which Northland operates a school, as in the case of Grouard to High Prairie and Calling Lake to Athabasca.

d) locally resident pupils living within the school's immediate attendance area are transported to the local school. Some of the buses so operated are motor vehicles but a considerable number are horse drawn, in the form of van or caboose mounted on a wagon or on sleighs in winter.

For any school jurisdiction operating buses there are problems, large and small, complaints about routing, objections to certain drivers, problems of servicing, and the never resolved dilemma as to whether ownership by the school authority or contracting out is preferable.

The Study Group heard a number of complaints about busing. These always related to some local circumstance. Its conclusion is that given the problems of roads and distances, the availability, or lack thereof, of suitable personnel and of servicing facilities, the operation proceeds as well as can be expected.

Three complaints were registered against bus drivers, one allegedly drove too fast, one allegedly discriminated against a particular family, one was allegedly incompetent. The Study Group did not deem it to be its function to look into these specific allegations, advising the complainants to direct them to the divisional board or its officers. It could not but observe, however, that whether the allegations were based on some degree of fact or not, there seemed to be in some instances a component of personal or family animosity. This sort of circumstance increases the difficulty faced by the division in making selections and appointments.

In the matter of ownership of motor vehicles the division employs both practices, ownership and contract, depending on the circumstances prevailing in any community at any time. This flexibility seems necessary under the circumstances.

At the Susa Creek - Muskeg River meeting attention was drawn to a problem related to the carrying of occasional adults, especially those enrolled in the community vocational centre.

There was a question as to insurance coverage. The transportation of such adults seems to be desirable when space is available. The matter of adequacy of insurance should be looked into.

In one community, Fishing Lake, complaint was made that the division had let, or relet, a bus contract without advertising. It was stated that a local person, or persons, would have been interested in bidding, obtaining a bus and through the contract, if engaged, bringing some additional revenue into the community. The Study Group is sympathetic to this sort of arrangement while recognizing the overall necessary concern of the division for safe, efficient and reliable service. Reference has been made on several occasions of the desirability of directing school expenditures to local persons who thereby become usefully employed with both psychological and financial benefit.

The horse drawn operations, which were observed in action at a number of locations, were of considerable interest. Inquiry revealed that these vehicles usually operated within a relatively short distance from the school sometimes a maximum distance of two miles or less. The School Act still provides that transportation is mandatory only with respect to pupils over three miles from school. Northland is providing a service more generous than required by law. In many communities no pupil lives beyond three miles.

The fact is that in most jurisdictions providing transportation there is much greater generosity than that required by law, and there is the thorny question as to the cut-off distance within which pupils are not picked up as the bus approaches the school.

The Study Group at first had some query about the transportation of pupils living a mile or less from school. Discussion with principals and staffs satisfied it that it was desirable, probably necessary. Northern winters are severe. Most roads are not plowed. Little children especially, would experience difficulty, even danger, walking to school. Attendance, such an important factor, would drop. All things considered this service appears to be warranted.

It is worth noting that the teacher-aide, counsellor-aide, school lunch and transportation programs, and the school custodianship, provide opportunities for gainful employment. This is of advantage to those employed in a monetary way, and also brings money into the community. There is also the sense of making a contribution to the life of the community.

We come now to two related matters, both of which have appeared, or will appear, in other chapters of this report. These are age-grade retardation and drop-outs.

It requires no deep research to reveal that very large numbers of pupils in Northland schools have not achieved to the level which is deemed commensurate with their ages and number of years in school. However the Study Group did request and receive the assistance of Dr. John A. Bacon, of the Department of Education staff, to conduct, in consultation with the appropriate divisional officers, a statistical study of the related factors of grade retardation and drop-outs.

There had been made some years earlier a study of these matters as they existed in Northland schools by W. C. McCarthy. His findings appear in a Masters thesis entitled, "Indian Dropouts and Graduates in Northern Alberta, 1971." This study took as its benchmark the school year 1963-64 and was in part a sequential study tracing pupils through and beyond school to 1971. Much of his material, including charts and tables together with other relevant findings, was reproduced in the comprehensive report, "Native Education in Alberta," submitted to the Minister of Education in June 1972.

Dr. Bacon was asked, particularly, to attempt to discover what changes, if any, had occured over the intervening years. He tabulated data in similar and comparable fashion.

Unfortunately the figures used by McCarthy and Bacon were for different times of the school year, June in one case and September in the other, and the summary figures are therefore not strictly comparable.

However, Dr. Bacon did accumulate data for 1970 and 1974 which are comparable, the same bases having been used. These show somewhat less grade retardation in 1974 as compared with 1970.

But here again caution must be exercised. One does not know, and cannot determine with any degree of reliability, the extent to which over the intervening years promotion from grade to grade has become more automatic, less rigid, partly as a result of divisional or supervisory policy and partly as a result of changed teacher attitudes. It has become increasingly policy and practice to promote a pupil to the next grade if not automatically, at least if he is making some progress. To the extent that this had been done in 1974 in greater degree than in 1970 the figures lose their reliability for purposes of comparison.

The Study Group is certain that grade retardation is greater in Northland than in schools generally. This is not the whole story. Grade retardation based on identifiable ages and grade designations does not reveal the true state of affairs regarding accomplishment. To say that a pupil is in grade 5 and to so regard him statistically may leave out of consideration the fact that in terms of actual accomplishment he is only in grade 3 for most of his school subjects, capacity to read, do arithmetic, spell or any other.

A comprehensive testing program would be necessary to obtain data. When derived they might well be suspect for a variety or reasons.

The Study Group is convinced, based on observation and discussions with staffs, that a rather high percentage of Northland pupils are not only grade-retarded but also accomplishment retarded within their nominal grades. Hence the situation is worse than may be revelealed by sheer statistics.

The reasons for this situation have been enlarged upon earlier in this chapter and as indicated there the alleviation of it, hardly a solution at this stage, is better instruction and the facilitation thereof, combined with enhanced community and parental support and reinforcement.

It does, however, lead into the difficult question of promotion. Traditionally, in Alberta schools, each child moved into the next grade, - he passed, - if he had met some sort of minimal level of accomplishment. If he barely skimmed through he might not really be prepared for the work of the next grade. Nevertheless he moved up honorably. The alternative meant failure, being required to start the work of the grade over again and being placed in a group of pupils a year younger than those with whom he had previously been joined. This process was fraught with dishonor.

The outcome of the dishonor was loss of pride, development of resentment, loss of ambition, a hatred of school. It was for these reasons that alternatives have been sought. The simplest, and the one most recently popular, is that of automatic, or near automatic, promotion regardless of accomplishment, the concomitant theory being that the teacher would modify and individualize the program of a so-promoted pupil so that he would not be placed in the position of having impossible tasks placed upon him.

The other, sought by several generations of educators, is to institute a continuous

progress plan whereby each pupil, or specially selected pupils, proceed through a curriculum or program of studies at their own rate and without grade designations. Despite many attempts no such scheme has had such success that general adoption by schools has resulted. It is, however, the one that makes most sense, although it places a greater burden on the teacher, it requires more individual help, and it means lower pupil-teacher ratios.

What actually is Northland's policy? A letter and a report from one of the division's supervisory officers reveal that the division does not actually have an official policy, i.e. adopted by the board.

In the spring of 1974 the then superintendent of schools issued a "working paper" on Promotional Policies and subsequently another officer issued a document headed Continuous Progress Plan. These epitomize current thought on these matters and are deemed to consolidate ideas which were or might be currently held in the division.

Some quotations are as follows:

> Students who are below the average in achievement in the Language Arts in Grade 1 should be promoted to Grade 2, but will not commence work at the Grade 2 level for some time.
>
> It is generally accepted that pupils rarely gain by repeating a grade, and that in fact progress is somewhat better if they are promoted.
>
> Each year's work is divided into four units. The slower group are expected to cover three of these units in one year. The average groups cover four of these units in one school year.
>
> Year-end promotions and failures are eliminated (in part). A slower child is not required to repeat material which he has mastered. He begins the new year where he left off.

It would appear that where traditional grading is in effect there is a strong tendency to promote nominally in Northland's schools which gives a distorted view of actual accomplishment. It has been stated that continuous progress is being tried, or tried in some limited form, in some Northland schools. The Study Group did not have this actually demonstrated to it in any school.

The supervisor of instruction has advised that at a principal's meeting in June, 1975, the two papers, Promotion Policy and Continuous Progress, were to be discussed perhaps leading to some recommendations to become board policy.

The Study Group looks favorably on the continuous progress plan and urges that continued steps be taken to develop and implement it. The supervisor pointed out that any such plan requires school staffs to experiment, to work together, and to be innovative, and that these are hard to come by where principals and teachers so often come new to their schools each year.

There are, however, two related matters about which the Study Group wishes to comment.

The first has to do with parents, their understandings and their expectations. It must come as a crushing blow and a disillusionment for a parent who is interested in and thoughtful about his child's progress and future to learn through the inexorable progress of events that the child whom he has been led to believe has "passed" grade 8 is in fact really only a 6, that the child who has entered grade 9 is not a true 9 and cannot be expected to go on to high school next year, if ever. Parents must be let know the true facts of their children's accomplishments. This may be difficult and embarassing to do but the school staff, or someone, must do it, beginning early when the circumstances require.

The second, which has been referred to earlier, is that there needs to be a make-up year, probably after grade 9, though a case can be made out for after grade 8, designed

to enable high school bound pupils to recover lost ground, lost perhaps through language difficulties, or poor attendance, and to be in a position to face high school work with greater prospect of success. Individualized tutorial instruction would be necessary. This should be thought of as an interim measure becoming unnecessary when through continuous progress programs to other rectification pupils do not pass out of grade 9 unprepared to cope with high school work.

There remains one further topic, that of dropouts. Actually little discussion is necessary. Dropping out is to such a great extent the result of the same factors that have been discussed in relation to grade retardation that further discussion would be redundant.

The McCarthy study, 1971, quoted in Native Education, Alberta, found that 78% of Northland students left school before Grade 10, and 97% before grade 12. Dr. Bacon found the percentage applicable to grade 10 to be 80%. He did not produce a grade 12 figure. While again one cannot be completely sure that the data are strictly comparable it appears that the situation had not much changed from 1971 to 1974.

McCarthy attempted to discover from drop-outs why they had dropped out. Some two-thirds blamed the school in some fashion. One must be cautious of accepting this assessment too readily. One will rarely blame himself, or his home, or any factor that impinges upon himself. In any event few human acts can be attributed to a single causal factor.

If anything significant is to be done about this it will have to be through the same processes, at school and at home, that will lead to improved performance throughout the child's school career. The child who succeeds along the way will be much less likely to become frustrated by, and indifferent or antagonistic to school, which must surely be the major causes of dropping out.

In a number of the communities served by Northland the Department of Advanced Education operates adult instructional services called Community Vocational Centers. These have as their chief purpose the enabling of adults to improve their educational levels and increase their employability through academic upgrading.. Inevitably much of their clientele are persons who have dropped out of school and who now wish to improve themselves. One of their features is that monetary allowances are paid to students while in attendance. The Study Group made no attempt to assess the success of the programs offered.

They did impinge upon the considerations of the Study Group in two respects.

1. The statement was occasionally made that their presence and benefits affected school attendance, that older pupils could leave school, stay out for a year, and then enrol and be paid for school attendance.

The superintendent of schools advised that he had heard this allegation on more than one occasion, that he had tried to discover specific instances, but had failed to do so. He does not deem it to be a significant factor in respect of drop-outs.

2. The question was on a few occasions raised as to whether Northland should expand its efforts into the field of adult education.

The Study Group is disposed to say that with the tremendous task the division has in providing and improving elementary and secondary schooling it does not need a further responsibility to dissipate its resources and energies.

The C. V. C. operations are for the time being attempting to do for the adults what most urgently needs to be done and should be left to adjust and adapt to needs as they arise.

CHAPTER EIGHT

## High School Services

The provision of high school services was a subject that arose with some frequency at the public meetings held in the communities.

The number of pupils actually in attendance at a high school is small. A report provided by the central office indicated that as of September, 1974, there were 110 pupils enrolled in schools of other jurisdictions as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Grade X | 47 |
| XI | 36 |
| XII | 27 |
| Total | 110 |

To this total should be added the 7 Grade X pupils at Mistassiniy School in Desmarais making a grand total of 117. Some difficulty is experienced in keeping fully up to date as to how many have dropped out during the year. As of April 3, 1975, it was known that the number had decreased to 99.

The 110 figure does not include Treaty Indian students because when they leave a Northland school they become the direct responsibility of Indian Affairs and cease to enter into Northland's statistics, or to be of administrative concern. The number of these from Northland is quite small.

Of the 110, 41 were being transported by bus to such schools as High Prairie, Fort McMurray, Athabasca and Cold Lake. The remaining 69 were boarding in such communities as Edmonton, Peace River, High Level, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, Slave Lake, Fairview, Fort Smith (N.W.T.) and Manning. The division pays any fees involved, provides texts, and pays a boarding allowance. The Study Group heard little complaint regarding the financial arrangements, although there are occasional problems of an accounting or authorization nature in relation to the provision of books. No attempt was made to ferret out the precise causes of problems in this area.

It was anticipated that grade X would be available at Atikameg in 1975-76, including busing of pupils from Gift Lake. A minimum of ten pupils is required by the division to institute this service. There seemed to be some question as to whether this might be reached. Similarly, grade XI was a possibility at Mistassiniy if sufficient enrolment, including pupils from Wabasca, could be foreseen. (Note: As of June 11, 1975, it appeared that a sufficient complement of grade XI pupils was extremely doubtful.)

In the year 1974-75, as of November for which a return was at hand, there were enrolled in grade IX in divisional schools 89 pupils. At the same time approximately 45 were being bused to schools of other jurisdictions for a total of 134. Of these an unknown number, probably quite small, were Treaty Indians. This is not a very large group from which to recruit a grade X enrolment. While the grade X figures are not sequential to the grade IX figures they are probably comparable, 134 enrolled in grade IX, 64 in grade X, a very considerable dropout. Note also that persistence from grade X to grade XII is in similar vein, 47 becoming 27.

Two aspects of the high school problem surfaced with considerable regularity, the preparation of the Grade IX graduates to do high school work, and the best locale for the service.

The Study Group is convinced, based on reports and observations from a number of quarters, that a high percentage of the Grade IX graduates are marginal in their accomplishments and for this and other reasons, find the high school work into which they are plunged, in a quite new sort of school situation, very difficult. No records exist to show how many proceed into academic (matriculation) patterns, and how many enrol in general or vocational high school

programs. The schools attended may limit or determine their choices in any event.

Their difficulties are compounded in varying degrees because of loneliness, shyness, poor boarding accommodation, lack of guidance and control, discrimination, overt or covert, lack of motivation, and other reasons. Many succeed in spite of any handicaps there may be. Others do not.

Reference is made here to the situation regarding junior high school grades. As of September, 1974, grade VII was available in 21 of the thirty schools, grade VIII in eighteen and grade IX in eleven. The pupils enrolled in these grades were respectively 207, 131, and 86, a total of 424.

The matter of pupil-teacher ratio was raised on occasion by teachers. A document provided to the Study Group showed the numbers of pupils in each of the thirty schools, the numbers of teachers assigned to each, and the resulting pupil teacher-ratios for each school. These varied from a low of 6, at Brewster's Camp, to a high of 24 at Pelican Mountain. The average was 17.2. It is difficult to adjust staffs to fit individual schools, especially small ones, because of fluctuating enrolments and availability of space. It is not always feasible to provide an additional classroom and an additional teacher when in what is normally a one or two room school the ratio rises to a figure above 20.

However, an analysis of teachers assigned to junior high school grades, taking into account that some teach also grades below seven, indicates that the ratio applying to these grades is about 19. Here again distribution factors affect individual schools and no figure can be universally and readily applied.

The Group is of the view that having regard to the special needs of the junior high group a target of fifteen might well be striven for. Preparation for high school work would be thereby enhanced.

Because, as will be discussed below, the Study Group sees no over-all alternative at this stage to the extensive use of high schools of other jurisdictions, it has sought to find useful things that might be done to help the young people concerned achieve more success and satisfaction in their high school work.

To the extent that pupils are only marginally prepared in terms of reading ability, language skills, basic knowledge and study habits only remedial assistance can help.

Every grade IX pupil who is a prospect for grade X should be tested. If his capacities are low or marginal it is no kindness to put him into grade X, especially in a strange situation which gives rise to apprehension. Instead with the consent of his parents, who may not easily be persuaded, he should be given the opportunity of a make-up and remedial year, offered by the division itself, or in cooperation with some other school authority. Very competent teachers using tutorial methods would be necessary. Arrangements might be made to do this at Grouard where residential accommodation might be found. This arrangement should be in effect only until achievement levels improve and it thereby becomes unnecessary.

This plan may not be easy to implement or to sell. The Study Group is prepared to say only that it should be tried or explored. The alternative, as in so many aspects of Northland's operations, is to continue the present ways of doing things with their limited success and slow, if any, progress.

Another suggestion with respect to grade IX and prospective grade X pupils is that arrangements be made towards the end of each school year for them to visit the high school which they might subsequently attend, or a similar one, so that they might have a modest bit of

orientation prior to entry in September. All high schools are somewhat hectic places at and during school opening, with little time to devote to the orientation of what are essentially strangers. Perhaps the students' councils of such schools, or some student club or organization, might be willing to take the hosting of such visitors on as a project, including acceptance into their homes for a couple of days.

Obviously, an essential and prerequisite to improving or extending high school service is to increase the numbers of pupils in Grade IX. The general criticism that too few pupils go into high school ought rather to be a criticism that too few reach and persist through grade IX. No very significant improvement in high school services or in high school involvements can be expected until the number of pupils available from grade IX substantially increases. That is where the bottle-neck is.

When "high-school" is offered in a divisional school for a very small number of pupils there is the difficult question as to what sort of high school, what subjects? Limitations of teacher time preclude a broad offering. Should the grade X at Atikameg, if instituted, be a group of matriculation oriented courses, or those designed in the school program for the less intellectually oriented pupil? This must be determined for each current group. The prospect of success in whatever is tried must be judged and a program arranged accordingly.

What if the program is non-academic and there are one or two pupils competent to take the academic fare? The solution seems to be either for them to go elsewhere, as they would have had to do in any event, or to enrol in some teacher-assisted correspondence courses. A small high school cannot be all things to all pupils. Divisional officers reported that in general non-matriculation courses are offered. Matriculation type students are, in the main, better able to cope with going away to school.

The above factor was not often raised at public meetings. Perhaps the parents were not really aware of the problem. The major question was locale.

Four possibilities seem open to the division, disregarding correspondence courses which are not likely to be very successful unless under school supervision. These are:

1. Daily transportation of pupils to a high school of another jurisdiction, as from Grouard to High Prairie;

2. Boarding of pupils in cities or towns where high school service is available;

3. Operation of a dormitory, or a system of hostels in conjunction with a major divisionally operated high school. Hostels might be possible in connection with non-divisional schools, such as at Peace River;

4. Operation of local high schools.

The size-of-school dilemma has not been solved in relation to high schools generally, except perhaps to say that the limitations of program and in effectiveness of the very small high school, one or two teachers, are usually accepted. There are misgivings, too, about the very large high school. This is not likely to be a problem in relation to Northland pupils except for those that may go to a big city school.

In the matter of where high school should be attended there was much expression of unhappiness about pupils having to go away from home. This unhappiness had an inverse relationship to the grade. Greatest concern was expressed about grade IX's having to go away, but it persisted in respect of higher grades. The reference was primarily in relation to being away in the boarding situation. Where busing was involved the concerns were diminished. In fact, not much objection was raised to busing for high school purposes and as might be expected some regarded it as the best solution possible.

The catalogue of complaints and concerns related to boarding included the following:

1. Lack of supervision of the children; fear of developing bad habits or consorting with undesirable company;

2. Loneliness and homesickness, leading to poor performance, or dropping out;

3. Discrimination, or a sense thereof; a feeling of not really belonging;

4. Lack of guidance and sympathetic understanding on the part of the schools.

It should not be taken that such complaints or concerns had universal application or universal acceptance. Some parents spoke favorably of their children's experiences, or accepted the arrangements as being the best among the possible choices. Nevertheless, they are undoubtedly valid in a sufficient number of cases to warrant being seriously taken into consideration.

Regarding boarding allowances these were not the subject of much critisism. The board reviews them from time to time, the last upward revision being effected in February, 1975. They need to be kept under constant review by the board and its officers to assure that they are adjusted in accordance with current and changing conditions.

In the matter of busing one of the factors is that of participation in extra-curricular activities. Buses leave school immediately following afternoon dismissal. Bused pupils must leave at that time, unless private arrangements are made, which precludes participation in games, clubs, practices for performances and events, and the like. This problem is by no means peculiar to Northland, applying wherever non-town pupils are brought in by bus. The Study Group concluded that Northland is not unaware of this problem and does occasionally make buses available for special events or circumstances. There is a limit, however, to which it can go especially to accommodate individuals or small groups. It can only be suggested that reasonable generosity be shown in such matters.

Time and time again the public meetings said, "We want a high school in our own community." This would be said in a community where only a two or three teacher school was in operation with total enrolments of 30 to 50 pupils and a very limited number of pupils if any in grade IX. The factors of lack of prospective attendance, heavy cost of staffing and equipment, paucity of offerings and other limiting factors seemed not to be appreciated or understood. Keep the children at home was the dominant mood.

The Study Group has to say that there is no present solution in this direction. Prospective enrolments are too low; costs are too high; offerings would be too meagre; social interaction would be highly restricted.

The present divisional policy is to make a grade, such as X, locally available if there are in prospect ten pupils. Being in prospect at the time arrangements are being made for space, teaching staff and all else that is required does not assure that ten will be enrolled, or will persist in school, on and after September first. The division has to be flexible in this respect.

The Study Group believes this to be a reasonable policy. It noted the apparent readiness to operate a bus for a quite small number of pupils from Gift Lake to Atikameg in order to build up a grade X complement there.

Unfortunately, the number of places in the division where even grade X, let alone a "high school", can feasibly be offered, or are in prospect of qualifying in the future, is small indeed.

The proposal most frequently arising within the Study Group was that of the division operating a considerable high school at some such place as Desmarais or Grouard, together with residential accommodation. This is an attractive kind of proposition for which a considerable number of very enticing arguments can be found.

The division did for a number of years operate a high school and dormitory at Grouard. The 1969 Report of the Northland School Division Study Committee devoted several pages to the nature, merits, problems and prospects of the school, which was still in operation. At that time its own program was largely remedial and vocational. Students requiring regular high school service were bused to High Prairie. These would include locally resident pupils and dormitory pupils. In the main the Report was commendatory of the Grouard operation though conceding that there were some failures to reach goals that had been set, and that problems existed which had to be faced.

Yet in 1970 the operation was discontinued. The dormitory and part of the teaching facility have been taken over by the Department of Advanced Education for use as an Alberta Vocational Center.

The Study Group heard varied reports and versions as to why the operation had been discontinued. It seemed a not too productive exercise to try to get the facts, if there were facts. The factors cited were often of a quite subjective nature. Suffice to say that the problems and defects were of sufficient magnitude that continued operation was no longer deemed feasible.

In Grouard regret was expressed at the closing, which is by no means an unusual reaction when a community loses a facility. There was reference to the social, recreational and educational advantages to the pupils and community through the presence of the school and dormitory.

Should the Grouard school, or something like it be revived? Essentially, the question revolves about the dormitory facility, although the nature of possible or prospective offerings is also important.

The question was raised at a number of public meetings. The Study Group found little or no interest in a dormitory type school. As indicated above the sentiment was for a local high school. It was difficult to discuss the question on the basis of "if you can't have a high school is a dormitory the next best?" It can only be said that no body of opinion in this direction seems to exist. Whether such an operation could be sold, or resold, to the population seems scarcely to be determinable in advance.

Despite the above the Study Group had some favor for a dormitory school as the best of the various, not too attractive or feasible, possibilities. Its enthusiasm was dampened, however, following its visit to Cranberry Portage, Manitoba, which revealed that the operation there has been steadily diminishing in size, scope and patronage, and is in danger of being phased out. More about this can be read in the chapter on visits to other northern school jurisdictions. The Cranberry Portage plant was an excellent one. Staffing and diversity of offerings had been at a high level. It seems improbable that Northland could offer a better and more promising service.

The fact seems to be that parents, and perhaps pupils, do not want to be far from home, and despite negative factors and impediments prefer to avail themselves of nearer-to-home high school services, available in the cities, towns and villages which are reasonably accessible.

The Study Group has had to conclude that it cannot recommend a dormitory type operation despite its theoretical advantages. It is too

great a risk to expend large sums of money for an operation which in the apparent current climate is not likely to succeed.

Where does all this leave the division? Local provision is rarely feasible and can be moved into only very slowly, and as has been indicated above is really dependent upon achieving greater persistence into and through Grade IX.

Reliance will have to be placed on the use of the high school services of other jurisdictions by way of busing and boarding, the present dominant practices.

As for busing perhaps not much more needs be said. Not much fault was found with the actual bus services which seem to be satisfactorily organized. No neat solution, only flexibility and sympathetic understanding, can be seen to the problem of pupil participation in recreational and social activities.

Many bused pupils do have problems of integration, of participation, of motivation, and of satisfaction. No quick antidotes are available. Sympathetic understanding, guidance and counselling are needed and will help in some instances. Some additional help and liaison with the schools from the division itself should be of some benefit. This might come from the officer noted below.

Regarding pupils who must board this is a real problem. What might be cautiously referred to as good homes, that is ones in which living and study facilities are good, and there is an atmosphere of support and of reasonable control are, in this time of relative affluence, not likely to want boarders. While the Study Group made no actual examination it was led to believe that a number of pupils find themselves in quarters that are not conducive to good living and good study habits.

There was considerable discussion with divisional officers on how much responsibility the division should take in finding boarding places, or in actually placing pupils in them. Present policy is to regard placement, making arrangements, as the ultimate responsibility of the parent. To do otherwise places the division, and its officers, in a position of vulnerability if something goes wrong. The division attempts to be helpful, and would like to be able to be more helpful, but is not prepared to stand completely in loco parentis in this matter.

With this position the Study Group cannot disagree. It does believe, and so do divisional officers, that the division should be able to be more helpful both at the time of obtaining accommodation, and when difficulties arise.

It must be recognized that in many cases the parents are far away from where the child must board, are not educated, have limited communication capacity and may lack confidence in themselves to do what needs to be done.

The officer of the division most intimately involved in home placement of pupils and the problems faced by pupils away from home favors the setting up of, or operating what he terms "group homes". These would be residences of modest size accommodating eight or ten pupils and presided over by a small staff such as a married couple, preferably but not necessarily native. Such a home would be located where a number of divisional pupils attend the local high school, Peace River, Fort McMurray, even Edmonton.

A group home would differ from a dormitory in two respects:

a) It would be a smaller and more intimate place;

b) It would not have any direct association with a school.

It was stated that Health and Welfare,

and perhaps other agencies, require residential accommodation at times and might make use of such homes if at any particular time there was lack of full patronage.

Among those discussing the proposition varying views prevailed, except on one point, that it would be a somewhat expensive operation.

The Study Group cannot recommend the immediate widespread use of such a plan. It would be glad to see experimentation with one such unit if a suitable building can be found in one of the communities where a considerable number of pupils attend high school. Patronage, success, administrative difficulties, cost, are all too uncertain to plunge into the plan as though a solution to the housing problem.

It was noted that in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan where large numbers of pupils board out there are available the services of a home placement officer whose functions seem to be two-fold, to assist in the location of suitable living places, homes, and to do visiting and counselling in liaison with the schools to assist and to salvage pupils having problems. In theory, the guidance officer of the division has this sort of responsibility. His total responsibilities are so varied and so great, however, that he has little time for this function. Northland should have such an officer, preferably of native background.

This officer should have available for pupils and parents information about high schools in various communities and should also have available the best information possible about boarding accommodation. He should attempt to be especially helpful to those pupils and their parents who live in the more remote places.

It would be most useful, also, for the best possible records to be kept of what happens to students enrolled in high schools, including in so far as they can be ascertained, the reasons for dropping out when this occurs, and as to further education or career in the cases of those who persist.

All this brings us back to the uniqueness of Northland Division. Other divisions do not have this problem, this concern. High school services, while perhaps not always adequate in relatively small communities nevertheless operate in a smooth and relatively uncomplicated fashion. If Northland is to do as well as it can by its high school group, who themselves are so often beset by various handicaps not found universally, it must have special arrangements and services available.

Special mention may be made of the situation at Fort Chipewyan where in a sizeable community there is no high school. Northland itself has not sufficient population to warrant such a school. Most of the pupils of the community are the responsibility of the separate school district or of Indian Affairs. These are cared for, below high school, in the Bishop Piche School. The only immediate hope for high school service, which was urged at the public meeting, is some form of combined operation. In the other jurisdictions there appears to be some difference of opinion about the acceptability of the current arrangements involving chiefly Fort Smith, N.W.T., and as to whether cooperative arrangements are desirable.

The Study Group would favor a combined high school operation in this community. It became aware that some discussions, perhaps negotiations, are in progress under Department of Education auspices and so chose not to become further involved.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Teaching Staff

The procurement and retention of a competent and effective teaching staff is, in the opinion of the Study Group, first among the major problems faced by the division, the improvement of which is the chief challenge by which it is faced. There are many other serious problems, having their own degrees of importance and concern, but almost all have as a significant component the effect that they have on staffing.

During the course of their visits to all the schools of the division, members of the Study Group visited almost every classroom while in operation. These visits were normally made singly, and most classrooms were visited by two or three members of the Group. The visits were necessarily brief but the coverage, in total, was extensive. No formal testing was done. The conclusions arrived at were based on subjective observation. It has been made clear to the teachers, or at least the attempt was made to do so, that there was to be no evaluation of individual teachers, no reporting on them, and that no individual records were being made.

The collective opinion of the Study Group is that the quality of staff was not as good as it would like to have seen. In making this statement, the Group is aware that it is in danger of seeming to put all teachers in the same category. This would be most unfair. As in any school system, the complement of teachers ranges from one extreme to the other, there being many teachers whose work warrants praise and commendation. It is just that too many seemed to be at the lower end, and the median lower than might be wished.

It must be added, in defense of the total teaching staff, that they were in situations which made brilliant performance difficult and unlikely-newness to the school, generally unresponsive pupils, at least vocally, struggling with grade retardation, teaching at grade levels not in accordance with preparation, and the like.

Nevertheless, taken as a whole the level of performance, for whatever reasons, left something to be desired. Some of the more mature teachers volunteered similar views, not about individual teachers or colleagues, but taking an objective view of the situation.

In the sections of this chapter dealing with recruitment and retention, there will be found additional discussion relevant to this subject.

### Recruitment

Teacher recruitment is a crucial function in any school system. This is particularly true in Northland where, during the 1974-75 school year, approximately half the teachers, 70 in number, were new to the school division. With such a large turnover of staff, recruitment requires a tremendous amount of effort and must command a top priority on the time of the senior administrators of the school division for a significant portion of the year. The proper effort and care given to this process at the right time can result in a decrease in other problems in personnel management.

An examination of the statistics on new teachers in the school division reveals that 45 new teachers were recruited in Alberta, 4 came from the rest of Canada, and the balance of 21 teachers were recruited in the United States. The American teachers were all recruited in the state of Oregon, but many of them have their origins elsewhere.

During the travels of the Study Group to the schools of Northland it met some teachers who had been recruited in Great Britain in previous years. In addition there was a scattering of teachers who originally came from other

countries of the world.

There is one class of teacher, normally well represented on teaching staffs, which is conspicuous by its absence in Northland. Seldom in its travels did the Study Group find married teachers with children of school age in Northland schools. In those cases where these teachers were encountered, they almost invariably told the Study Group that they felt uneasy about staying on in their positions and denying their children the normal experiences of childhood in more developed communities. Instances of discrimination against white children in native schools were cited and, in one case, were given as the reason why the teacher planned to leave Northland at the end of the school year.

In several discussions which the Study Group had with various groups, a strong preference was expressed for Alberta teachers. This was justified on the grounds that Albertans are the nearest representatives of the larger society to which the school introduces the native child, and that they serve as good speech models for native children learning English. Another advantage enjoyed by Alberta teachers is that they are familiar with the Alberta curriculum and are spared the difficulty of adjusting to an unfamiliar provincial school system just at the time that they must face great demands on their time and attention by the requirements of an inter-cultural teaching situation.

The Study Group was disturbed to find a very considerable number of teachers whose preparation, and hence whose interest presumably, was in secondary education teaching in primary or other elementary grades. This no doubt arose from the necessity of making last minute appointments. It is a most undersirable situation.

With regard to the importance of good speech models in Northland schools, the Study Group was told on several occasions that there is no prejudice against foreign teachers in Northland schools provided they speak English well without a distracting accent.

There were encountered two or three teachers about which the Group had concern, and there was local complaint in at least one case. The teachers concerned spoke "school" English with reasonable correctness. Accents, however, were distinctive and occasionally difficult to catch. Unusual constructions and idioms were not uncommon. For persons who have a good knowledge of the English language conversation can proceed satisfactorily, perhaps even pleasantly; but for pupils whose own English is limited, whose ear is not readily tuned to the unusual, and who need a speech model essentially like that which they will encounter in the society about them, it is not good enough. Whether such teachers should be in any Alberta elementary school is a question. They ought not to be in the more difficult Northland situation.

Since it is the stated policy of Northland to give preference to Alberta teachers when staffing its schools, it is evident that Alberta teachers have not responded in sufficient numbers to Northland's advertisements and efforts to make recruitment elsewhere unnecessary. As a result of its discussions with others and its internal deliberations the Study Group has come to the conclusion that a more vigorous recruitment program within Alberta is necessary. The following suggestions should be examined by Northland:

1. The three universities of Alberta offer a considerable number of courses in inter-cultural or cross-cultural education. While it cannot be assumed that every education student in these courses has a strong desire to teach in a cross-cultural situation, it seems safe to assume that at least some of these future teachers have an interest in this direction. Recruitment officers of Northland should establish contacts with the instructors of these courses and offer their services to them as resource people

which would give them an opportunity to make contact with this pool of potential teachers and to bring to their attention the possibilities for service and employment which exist in Northland. Some classes in inter-cultural education should be encouraged to visit Northland schools for field experiences.

2. The first contact that many prospective teachers have with Northland School Division is when they receive a recruitment brochure in response to an indication of interest. Several teachers reported to the Study Group that the first information they received was so much out of date that teachers arriving in Northland communities found the situation very different from that described. Northland should develop an attractive and comphrehensive teacher recruitment brochure and keep it up-to-date year by year. These brochures should be given wide distribution, particularly at the universities in Alberta. In addition to having a good recruitment brochure, recruiters, during their travels and interviews, should be well supplied with information about the schools and communities for which they are recruiting teachers. They should be able to show to prospective teachers such things as color pictures and floor plans of the school and living accommodation and provide lists of teacherage furnishings and school equipment.

3. On several occasions it was suggested to the Study Group that the romance of the north has not been effectively exploited by Northland. Most Northland communities offer opportunities for some activities which are available elsewhere only with great effort. Hunting and fishing are most obvious ones. Experiences in cross-cultural situations are of interest to many people and are readily available in Northland. The Study Group met many teachers who love the north and is satisfied more such teachers could be found in central and southern Alberta.

4. A more effective appeal to the altruism of people might be made. A greater effort might be made to inform teachers of the opportunities for service to disadvantaged people in northern Alberta. While many volunteers for service in developing countries are motivated by a desire to travel as well as to serve, there are undoubtedly many who simply are not aware of the needs in northern Alberta.

5. It seems to the Study Group that there might well be teachers in other school jurisdictions in Alberta who would welcome an opportunity to serve in Northland for a year or two but who would not resign their present positions to do so. Such a resignation would entail loss of seniority and other benefits in their present systems. Teachers wishing to serve in Department of National Defence schools in Europe are able to do so without leaving the employment of their school boards. The services of the teacher are contracted to the Department of National Defence by agreement between it and the teacher's employing board. The possibility of such an agreement between Northland School Division and other school boards in Alberta should be investigated. Increasingly, the large urban school systems are enrolling native children in their schools and are faced with the problems and challenges of inter-cultural education. Such an agreement with Northland can work to the advantage of both parties in that the pool of potential teachers is enlarged for Northland the other school system is able to give some of its teachers an experience which will make them more effective on their return.

6. Another device which might expand the pool of potential teachers for Northland is to develop an attractive program of internship. If such a program could be made attractive enough to enroll large numbers of teachers newly certificated and not yet under contract, it would provide an excellent opportunity for both teachers and the school system to assess each other.

7. Northland currently has a bursary plan

pursuant to which students are subsidized to the extent of $900 a year to attend a faculty of education. They agree in return to render service within the division for a limited time. Only two students were being assisted during 1974-75 and neither is available for service in September 1975.

The purpose of this program is not only to provide some staff recruits but also to assist Northland high school graduates to advance in terms of a career. The level of support is probably no longer realistic and if there is to be any contribution to staffing applicants must be obtained from a wider constituency. Students about to enter the fourth year of their programs would appear to be the best recruiting ground.

The fact is, however, that funds are now very considerably available to students from government aid sources which make any form of indenturing to a school board less necessary and attractive.

One of these is the Northern Alberta Development Council bursary program which assists students from Alberta, especially Northern Alberta, to pursue post-secondary education on the understanding that they will serve in the North upon completion of their training. The bursaries are of general application, not confined to teacher education. The current maximum amount payable for an unmarried student is $2500 annually.

Northland may experience some difficulty in competing but might be able to direct interested students towards this program.

There do not seem to be any formal criteria for the selection of teachers for Northland schools. The nature of the schools suggests that special care must be taken in selecting teachers. The teachers in Northland stand in a special relationship to their students in a manner not found elsewhere. One brief presented to the Study Group stated that in the isolated communities the school is the door to the outside world and the teachers are the most important link to that world. It went on to suggest that the criteria for selecting teachers must emphasize personal characteristics such as warmth and patience. Among other things, the selection process should be able to screen out those who do not possess an ability to cope with unusual situations, who tend toward arrogance and inflexibility, and those with an intense commitment to religious proselytization.

Every effort should be made to increase the pool of teacher applicants sufficiently so that a meaningful selection process can be applied. Recruitment officials of Northland should develop more specific selection criteria with an eye to the very special needs of their school system.

This is easier said than done but the effort must be made. Perhaps the process used by the Canadian International Development Agency for selecting teachers for overseas positions should be examined for relevance to Northland's selection procedures.

It is currently the policy of Northland to recruit teachers to the school system at large and to reserve the right to place individual teachers in any school where they may be required. While such a policy may be administratively convenient and may indeed be unavoidable in certain circumstances, it has certain disadvantages which should be taken into consideration. First, such a policy immediately reduces the number of possible applicants, since many people are not prepared to leave this much discretion in the hands of their future employers. A teacher who might be quite willing to work in Grouard but not in Fort Chipewyan has no real option but not to submit an application. Another disadvantage is that teachers who are hired on this basis have little, if any, opportunity to make proper preparation for the positions they will be filling since final assignments are

frequently delayed until shortly before the school term begins. The most serious disadvantage of this policy, however, is that there is no opportunity for the new teacher to visit the community in which he might or will be teaching either before or immediately after the signing of the contract.

The Study Group is well aware that there are serious problems in recruiting exclusively to specific positions. There is a need for early recruitment before all resignations are received. Some provision must be made to accommodate requests for transfers. Some flexibility in this matter is inevitably required. Fortunately there are some teachers who are ready to accept placement anywhere and whose qualifications, professional and personal, make them suitable candidates for a variety of different positions.

It is the view of the Study Group that, wherever possible, a teacher should be able to apply for a specific position and that, if he so desires, he be able to visit the school and community, talk to the existing staff, and meet some of the local people before he signs a teaching contract. Given the circumstances in Northland, he should be able to do this at the expense of the school board. Many of the advantages of such a practice are immediately obvious, but there is pointed out especially the opportunity that such a practice would give for local people, and particularly members of the local school committee, to meet the teachers before they are assigned to the school, and to participate in their selection.

Another possible advantage of recruiting teachers to specific positions rather than to the system as a whole is that this practice may result in more appropriate placement of teachers. The Study Group encountered in primary classrooms surprisingly large numbers of teachers with teaching experience and training at the secondary level. Regardless of what general recruitment policies are followed greater attention must be given to selection and placement.

Another specific concern of the Study Group which requires mention at this point is the practice of Northland School Division of using temporary contracts for all new teacher appointees. Again, while such a practice may have certain administrative conveniences and may seem very desirable when the pool of applicants is too small to permit careful selection, it has a very negative effect on the morale of teachers. It is suggested that the use of temporary contracts be minimized and that, when they are used, they be replaced by regular contracts as soon as the supervisory staff is satisfied that the quality of service being offered is satisfactory.

While it has been suggested that certain measures might be taken to increase the number of applicants for teaching positions in Northland, and that more careful selection procedures are necessary, it is emphasized that one way to attract good new teachers to Northland is to have a staff of competent teachers who are happy in their work and say so to their friends and anyone else who might ask them.

Retention

Northland School Division not only has difficulty in recruiting teaching staff of good quality it has difficulty in retaining the staff it does engage. There are, as might be expected, some who are hired that it is not desirable to retain. This becomes a subsidiary problem; but there can be no effective program of upgrading of total staff, or of eliminating those that are not effective until greater stability is achieved.

During the 1974-75 school year, the teaching staff had the characteristics indicated below. The teachers were counted as of March 27, 1975. Included in the count are four experienced teachers working on curriculum development, and

two teachers who serve as "facilitators", i.e. although engaged in special classroom service, they are supernumerary to the normal principal and classroom teacher complement. The figures do not include the travelling supervisory staff operating out of the superintendent's office.

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of certified teachers on staff | 144 |
| Number in the division for the first year | 70 |
| Number serving the division for a second year | 14 |
| Number serving the division for a third year or more | 60 |
| Number in present school for less than one year | 106 |
| Total number of school principals | 30 |
| Number new to the division | 13 |
| Number who are principal of the school now served for the first time | 25 |
| Number serving as principal in the current school for a second year | 3 |
| Number serving as principal in the current school for a third year or more | 2 |

These figures represent a very considerable turnover whether in respect of the division as a whole, or in respect of individual schools.

While the facts are rather clear from the above table, the following points may be emphasized:

1. Seventy out of 144 teachers were new to the division in 1974-75. If the 144 figure is reduced by the curriculum development staff and the facilitators, it is clear that the recruitment figure was slightly over 50%.

2. Since a considerable number of teachers who continued from the previous year were teaching in different schools as a result of transfers, whether by request or by direction, the total number of teachers serving a class of pupils for the first time was 106, or about 75%.

3. With respect to principals, which include the teachers in four one-room schools, out of a total of 30 there were 25 who were in that capacity in their present schools for the first year, with all that is involved in becoming acquainted with staff, school plant, pupils and community. Only five had continued in their present schools from the previous year. Of the total of 30 principals, 13 were entirely new to the division, indicating, one must assume, a lack of candidates from within the staff for promotion.

During the meetings held in the communities visited the matter of teacher turnover arose with great frequency. Teachers and principals who had been with the Division for more than a year frequently pointed out the negative effects of the situation. Parents and others in the public meetings also referred to this matter. They noted the obvious fact that it takes much time for teachers to get to know their pupils and for the pupils to get to know their teachers. It takes some time to establish rapport, and especially so when there are language and cultural aspects to be resolved. A further factor is that in so many instances no adequate records are left by departing teachers for the guidance of their successors. In any event, somewhat formal written records are a poor substitute for personal knowledge.

The matter of rapport has broader ramifications than the school itself. While it seems doubtful that the principal and staff will frequently become, in the total present setting, integral parts of the local communities, there are many points of contact and relationships that are essential and take time to develop.

These are severed when there is a change of staff.

A desirable exercise for the Study Group might have been to attempt to find a considerable number of ex-Northland teachers and to inquire as to why they left. This did not seem feasible, and in any event one might not be confident that some of the reasons given would be the true ones, or for that matter, that all could isolate and verbalize the essential factors.

The Study Group discussed the matter with current staffs from the point of view as to what factors exist or operate, or might exist or operate, tending towards their remaining with Northland, and in their present schools, and conversely what factors tend to affect them in the direction of leaving.

No staff, or principal, pointed to a single factor as being of paramount importance in these respects. All agreed that many factors are involved, many having different degrees of relevance in different communities.

The following is a catalogue of factors that seem to have some significant effect in the minds of current teachers, including some that are based on observations made by the Study Group itself.

1. Many teachers come to Northland in a spirit of adventure, perhaps tinged with a bit of altruism, with intent to have a year, or at most two years, of unusual experience. Their longer term life plans envisage a quite different ultimate career.

2. Many teachers whose original intentions may not be quite as well defined as in No. 1 above come to the same conclusion, i.e., that a year or two of the sort of service to be experienced in Northland is sufficient and should be terminated in favor of other experiences and opportunities.

3. There is, in so many respects, a kind of built-in impermanence. For example, it is not possible for a teacher, or family, to look forward to the owning of a home. Quite apart from other factors, land ownership is not possible in almost all, if not all, of the communities served. The residences provided, chiefly semi-permanently placed mobile homes, do not give a feeling of permanence, or an urge to accumulate goods and chattels and significant personal possessions.

4. There is a paucity of social life. One might hope for some sort of social involvement with the community, as is normally the case in respect of teachers in other Alberta communities--attending community functions, becoming part of a variety of community organizations and activities, and developing friendships with other persons and families. With regret, one has to conclude that in most of the communities served, this does not happen. In very few communities, even though there may be a veneer of friendliness, is there much mutual reciprocal acceptance of the local and the school societies in any real sense.

The teachers, hence are very much thrown together not only during school hours but also, if there is a desire for conversation, cards, music, or any other social diversion, during the rest of the day and on weekends. It is too much to expect a complete compatability in this regard.

Frequent mention was made of the so-called "compound" life, a group of homes placed side by side, relatively close together, with little or no attention to aesthetics. There are, of course, some very practical reasons for this arrangement, especially in providing utilities and conserving land in relation to the school grounds. Teachers feel that this arrangement keeps them in a school-oriented situation. Some urged that housing should be very considerably removed from the school grounds, an arrangement fraught with some practical problems. This

is discussed further in the chapter on teachers' residences.

5. Married teachers with children find that they have problems. They have their own children in their classrooms, which in general teachers do not like. Their children, usually one or two, are often the only non-native children in the school. They report that the children sometimes experience a kind of reverse discrimination. In any event, as they increase in age, better educational possibilities for them are wanted which can only be obtained by moving elsewhere.

6. Isolation is a strong factor in many of the communities. Most are many miles removed from any kind of service centre. Stores are small, lacking in refrigeration or may not exist at all. There is no drug-store, no service station, no clothing supply other than of a most rudimentary nature, if at all. Long trips to service centres are required, or hit and miss means of getting needs attended to must be relied upon. There is no doctor, no dentist, no hospital. Postal service is limited. Telephone service is often meagre, being through a "mobile" which is a single radio-telephone device usually located in a local residence. While this is a great boon to all it has distinct limitations. Several communities are still not served by any year round road.

On the positive side it may be said that there is a steady development of roads in evidence, that Alberta Government Telephones is steadily extending its lines, and that power is gradually reaching more remote settlements.

Nevertheless, taken in total, a teacher in many of Northland's schools must accept the fact that he will suffer a very considerable array of deprivations, inconveniences, and discomforts which reside in the situation and will exist for some years yet.

It is futile to say that these conditions also face the native people, or that in many respects the conditions are better than those a host of teachers put up with in the one-room schools and their teacherages in Alberta in the twenties and thirties. Many are prepared to accept the conditions for a year or two but not as long range commitment.

7. Water, sewer, and power deficiencies face many a teacher at school and in the residences. The division is up against some tremendous problems and handicaps in these regards. Northern Alberta has a great paucity of potable subsurface water. Well after well is dug only to be a failure. Makeshift arrangements have to be made. Sewage has to be disposed of in local systems which freeze or fail. Power is sometimes supplied by a local generator which a teacher must service. It may be generally satisfactory but inevitably fails at times.

Actually, most teachers seemed to accept the failures and inconveniences of utility services with a degree of cheerfulness and resignation, but again one can only say that over a period of time it is inevitable that they will be influenced to seek a locale in which the sign "Out of Order" is less likely to appear on the toilets with its consequent necessity of using the outdoor facilities in cold weather.

8. Teachers complained of irritations, large and small, which they say have a cumulative effect and tend to build up leading to a feeling that they have had enough, reinforcing any attitudes that may derive from isolation, lack of social life, and the like.

These may be catalogued as follows:

a) Maintenance problems,

b) Lack of supplies,

c) Lack of communication.

Regarding a), this is dealt with in a separate chapter. Teachers recognize that distance and isolation, as well as other factors, make a completely satisfactory repair and maintenance service difficult. This, however, does not make the deficiencies any easier to take. Undoubtedly it is one of the major factors affecting that group of teachers who do not regard themselves as transients. It applies to both school plants and residences.

With respect to b), the Study Group heard many times of the failure of supplies to be on hand at school opening. Again one can find some causes inherent in problems of distance, communication, and transportation, but again, also, it must be said that regardless of extenuating circumstances in individual cases, such defects are irritations.

In the case of c), lack of communication, the complaints were varied but centered chiefly around allegations that letters and messages go unanswered or unacknowledged leaving the principal and staff uncertain as to whether their problem, concern, or request has had, or is having, any attention.

9. Professional isolation was frequently referred to. The 1974 special fall institute was very much appreciated in this regard. It was noted, however, that there is minimal contact with other teachers. The facilitator program, described in chapter 10, operated minimally. There are no opportunities for attendance at evening classes for upgrading.

Chiefly under this category was the asserted lack of visits from the professional and administrative supervisory staff, the superintendent, and his assistants. Visits are alleged to be few, short, and superficial. Again it is conceded that there are inherent factors of distance and access. A visit to a classroom to the extent of a half day, which seems to be a minimum if there is to be good evaluation of a teacher, and enough observation made to be of some constructive assistance, seems to be a rarity. Teachers feel that visits are often perfunctory.

A concomitant of this is that teachers who, because of their physical and social isolation already feel on the fringe of things, deem themselves to be professionally neglected and develop a sense of being forgotten. One teacher summed it up in a bit of overstatement, but which nevertheless expressed the sentiment, by saying, "If someone would only come. He doesn't need to do anything, just come so that we would know that someone knows we are here."

Another allegation is that when supervisory personnel arrive, presumably for the purpose of observing and assisting instruction, their time becomes exhausted in an examination of problems relating to maintenance and other extraneous matters. One can well understand how this comes about. An emissary from head office, an infrequent one, is bound to become involved in anything and everything that is pressing for attention, but classroom and professional visitation suffers.

10. Strangely, the matter of salary received limited comment. That is to say, that while Northland teachers are not uninterested in having salaries commensurate with those paid elsewhere, plus additional recompense for the peculiar conditions existing, they did not advance, very often, the idea that it is salary that is the critical factor in retention of teachers. The isolation bonus is deemed to be inadequate. This will be discussed in detail in another section. Some urged a long-service bonus, long service being anything over three years.

Having regard to all the above factors, one might well ask how it is that the division retains even 50 percent of its teachers. It does so because there are teachers who enjoy some aspects of living and working in the north, who are fond of and devoted to the children they teach, who do not wish to be constantly

moving, and in a few instances, are able to achieve advancement from classroom to principalship, or to a larger school as teacher.

What can be done? Recruitment of teachers having suitable personalities, good teaching records, a sense of mission, a compatibility with semi-primitive environment, will naturally affect retention. This is discussed above.

It is clear, however, that over and above the recruitment factor steps must be taken to make the teaching staff happier. In addition to matters discussed in other chapters, the division can contribute to a greater sense of belonging and of satisfaction by:

a) Giving more attention to the aesthetics of the living arrangements;

b) Improving maintenance service to schools and residences;

c) Improving the procedures for the delivery of supplies and equipment, and the maintenance of the latter;

d) Improving communication with the schools, especially through more prompt and certain acknowledgement of letters, orders, and messages;

e) Providing more supervisory service, pursuant to which professional staff come to schools more frequently, stay longer and see more people. Small schools should receive special attention;

f) Revising the isolation bonus system, supplemented by some extras such as travel grants or expense allowances, to cushion the impact of isolation and deprivation;

g) Giving thought to activities which are designed to cause the teachers to think Northland in a positive rather than a negative way.

It is clear that only through the provision of more staff in central office, and perhaps some reorganization thereof, of an expanded and improved maintenance service, and of a larger professional field staff, can the above be accomplished, all of which have budgetary implications.

Finally, it may be said that among teachers there are wide variations in respect of their competence and propensity to deal with simple maintenance, aesthetics, and other facets of life in an isolated situation. The Study Group was occasionally impressed by the ability and readiness of a principal or teacher to look after and give remedial attention to immediate problems of considerable variety, and on the other hand, the failure or inability of others to do relatively simple and obvious things. The division is fortunate indeed when it has the former. Nevertheless, some of the services rendered over and above the call of duty are really an imposition on the teacher's or principal's time and may, in fact, detract from the performing of his main function. In any event, it is inevitable that there will be incumbents who have neither the inclination nor ability to become part-time maintenance volunteers. The division must accept a policy of minimizing the extent to which the teachers become involved in this matter.

This does not, in any way, absolve teachers from being good tenants, being careful of the division's property, and doing the preventive things that forestall failure or deterioration, whether in school or residence.

Salaries and Transportation

Northland being a school division in all respects like others except as otherwise provided by and through The Northland School Division Act, the salary schedule is subject to negotiation pursuant to the Alberta Labour Act. The basic schedules have been similar to and in harmony with those of school divisions generally. The

Study Group is cognizant of a number of factors that seem to point to this being desirable.

On the other hand, circumstances prevail in Northland schools and communities such that these salaries in themselves are quite inadequate, in competition, to attract teachers. There must be further benefits or inducements.

The first of these is the isolation bonus, an unnegotiated sum added to the salary of a teacher by board decision, related to the degree of isolation, to the lack of appeal of a community. It has to comprise two elements. The first is the actual increased cost of living arising from the isolation, cost of food, of transportation, of all sorts of things in and out, of the cost of services, professional and mechanical, over a great range. The other is social and psychological, an attempt to compensate monetarily for the lack of social intercourse, and the absence of varied kinds of stimulation and involvement, recreational, intellectual, and cultural.

The first, while very difficult to establish in any really precise way, has a dollar tag, at least theoretically. The second completely defies having a dollar value attached to it.

Currently the isolation bonuses range from a low of $400 to a high of $1900. The $400 figure applies to Grouard. The $1900 allowance is paid at Chipewyan Lakes, Garden Creek, Kateri (Trout Lake), and Pelican Mountain. The question was raised at Peerless Lake as to why its isolation bonus is less than that at Trout Lake, being $1500. No reason was immediately apparent since it seems to be equally isolated and in some ways more so.

It is some years since the isolation bonuses have been reviewed or revised. This needs to be undertaken with two aspects in mind, (a) should the level be raised:, and (b) should the relative placements of schools be revised?

The Study Group is of the view that some upward adjustment of the top figure is necessary. This does not mean that all need to rise or to rise equally. Some communities have become less isolated than they were through road, power, and telephone penetration during recent years. The upward revision would merely reflect inflationary factors which surely equally impinge upon the isolation bonus factor as they do upon the regular salary. Fort McMurray public school district, the Group was informed there, pays $2200. Special living cost factors may apply in that town, but the psychological and social isolation are very much less.

The Department of Education pays a portion of the isolation bonus through regular grant processes. It is much less than the actual payments made by the division. The current deficit is about $84,000. There has been a recent increase in the grant, but it is still far below what Northland pays, and must pay.

There may be reasons, having regard to a certain universality of application of this grant, for not increasing it unduly. In that case, the cost of isolation bonuses must be deemed to be a legitimate component of any special funding.

According to information available to the Study Group the basic salary of a teacher with four years of teacher education and one year of experience was, as of September, 1974, in each of four jurisdictions as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| North West Territories | $13825 |
| Frontier (Manitoba) | 10643 |
| Northern School Board (Saskatchewan) | 9475 |
| Northland | 9910 |

To these must be added northern or isolation bonuses which vary from school to school. The maximum in Frontier was $1000, Saskatchewan $2375, and in Northland$1900. Figures for the North West Territories were not immediately

available but it is known that allowances are paid. As far as the three provinces are concerned teachers qualified as above receiving maximum bonus had essentially the same salaries.

Comparisons must be made with some care, however, since the fringe benefits may vary from one jurisdiction to another.

It may be noted that Northland's negotiated salary schedule for 1975 increased the basic salary of the teacher qualified as above to $12000.

The Study Group also concluded that it would be salutary to provide each teacher with the opportunity to present an expense account twice a year to enable him or her to go to Edmonton, or another center not farther than Edmonton, for medical, dental, or other personal need. The mere getting out for a relief from isolation would be a contribution to morale.

The question is as to how much.

It is clear that the need of the teacher at Garden Creek is greater in all respects than that at Grouard or Calling Lake. It is suggested that the allowance for this purpose be a percentage of the isolation bonus, say 25%. It is assumed that such expense allowance would not be taxable as income. All sorts of workers are transported to and from their employment and for furloughs of all kinds at company expense and are not regarded as having received income.

Another possible formula would be to pay transportation expenses to Edmonton, or other center, in excess of some figure, such as $25 or even $50, thereby eliminating, or partially eliminating, those who are not truly in serious isolation.

There is a question as to what should be done regarding transportation in and out upon appointment and upon leaving a school at the end of the term. The Study Group is of the view that, having some regard to degree of isolation and expense, teachers should be assisted to reach their schools. Since most Alberta teachers taking employment with a school division or county have some expense reaching their schools, and some Northland schools are no more expensive to reach than many others, a formula similar to those suggested above would seem reasonable, i.e. that teachers whose schools are readily accessible need not have as much assistance, if any, while the really isolated ones warrant full, or almost full, subsidy. The purpose, of course, is not to give a benefit to a teacher, but to encourage teachers, or prospective teachers, to go to the most difficult-to-reach schools.

A completely rational formula is difficult to arrive at and requires considerable discussion by involved and affected persons. As a suggestion, automobile mileage might be paid on all mileage in excess of 150 miles from Edmonton. Where air transport is required, this should be paid in full, including the cost of some 400 pounds of baggage. It should include also the fares applicable to spouse, if not a teacher, and children.

A more difficult matter is that of transportation assistance at term end. The Study Group is of the opinion that the teacher who remains on staff and who is in a remote place should be assisted out, and assisted back in or to another divisional school, contributing some maximum amount as a personal expense, comparable with what other teachers might expect to pay.

The teacher who resigns or whose contract is terminated is a different case. One view is that comparable to industrial workers in the north, there should be transport from as well as to employment. This is probably not universally true. Another view is that since continuity of staffing is of such importance to Northland, any factor that will contribute towards it should be utilized. It is recommended that to

get full eligible subsidy a teacher should remain at his post for a minimum of two years, or at least with the division. If he leaves after one year, his eligibility for subsidized transportation out would be reduced by one half.

Since continuity of staff is such an important matter and seems so difficult to achieve, every device needs to be considered in an attempt to achieve it. Might it be salutary to negotiate a salary schedule providing for a larger increment after the first year than for the remaining years: How effective this would be in relation to contrary factors there is no way of knowing. It would warrant discussion at salary negotiation time.

Some discussion of teachers of native background follows later. However, in relation to salary structure, the Study Group is of the opinion that a bonus should be paid to teachers who speak the native language of the children in the school in which they teach. A knowledge of Cree, or Chipewyan, would be of enormous value to a teacher and his teaching in many Northland schools. Such bonus would serve as an inducement for teachers so qualified to join Northland's staff, or if already on staff to gain such proficiency.

Orientation

A subject commonly raised by teachers was that of orientation. Here again rapid turnover of staff aggravates the situation. Roughly half of the teachers employed in 1974-75 were new to their schools and to the sorts of communities they serve. Some preparation over and above what they have had is essential to try to assist them to meet the conditions and circumstances they will face. This is in large measure related to the fact that they have little knowledge, and in fact, may well have erroneous concepts.

Northland's practice is to conduct at Grouard just before school opening an orientation course of about a week, some of which is devoted to special sessions for principals.

No orientation program can be inclusive of all that might be desirable. Views vary greatly as to just what is being oriented into, or as to what will tend to achieve rapport with pupils and communities. How theoretical, in terms of inter-cultural studies, should a program be, or how practical in terms of information about specific communities?

The orientation program was commented upon by teachers whose views varied from faint praise to severe criticism.

Unfortunately the Study Group was unable to attend the orientation, one member being present for one day only, to make first hand observations. The concept seems good. The chief complaints were that some presentations were superficial, that too much was attempted in too short a time, and that some of the instructors, including some members of the board, did not make effective presentations.

The Study Group believes that the orientation program should be continued. It hopes that the numbers requiring it can be steadily reduced. It does not seem that it is feasible to lengthen it or to have it at a different time. One suggestion was that teachers go first to their schools then after a week come to orientation. Despite some pedagogical desirability of this, it has very practical objections, such as how is school to be organized to accommodate continuing teachers who would not wish to start a week early, or if school continued in operation, who would care for the classes of teachers at orientation.

The Group can only suggest that there be continued evaluation of the program with a view to making it as useful and as acceptable as possible. Poor presenters and theoreticians whose contributions are of little immediate benefit to the teachers should be avoided.

It is recommended that some materials be made available to new teachers. It is doubted

that these would be much used by new and almost overwhelmed teachers if merely placed in the school library in hopes that they will read or consult them. Doubtless there are many books that will help uninformed teachers to understand native peoples. Recently written by Emma LaRoque, in association with the Alberta Department of Education, is the book Defeathering the Indian. Miss LaRoque is herself a Metis. It would be useful to give or send to each newly appointed teacher a copy of this book. This should be done as soon as the teacher is engaged, not at the orientation course. Indians Without Tipis is another useful book, produced under the auspices of Project Canada West and printed by William Clare (Manitoba) Limited, Winnipeg. In this regard reference is made again to the recently issued Natives of North America, A Selected Bibliography for Native Studies Programs, mentioned in chapter 6.

Earlier appointment of teachers would in itself make a contribution to orientation enabling teacher and division to do more over a longer period of time by way of preparation. This comes back to the general recruitment problem discussed earlier.

The Study Group was pleased to note in the last issue of the year of The Beaver Express, the "official publication of Northland Local 69, Alberta Teachers' Association" the following:

> The P.D. (Professional Development) Committee consisting of Chairman Brian Holt and members, Zoltan Boda, Norm Herman, and Lloyd Hyatt met in Slave Lake April 26 to begin plans for the coming school year. The main topic of discussion was the orientation planned for next fall. They discussed topics to suggest and the format of ATA section.
>
> Plans were set in motion to hold one or two day workshops early in the fall especially designed to meet the needs of new teachers to Northland (how to operate a multi-grade classroom, teaching English as a second language). It was felt that these workshops could be held in or near Northland schools.

As indicated above, there exists in Northland a local of the Alberta Teachers' Association. One of its functions is to negotiate the collective agreement with the divisional board. But an A.T.A. local can interest itself in many other matters related to the welfare of its members and to the improvement of teaching. The above noted item is an illustration of the last.

Distance, isolation, problems of transportation plague every aspect of Northland's life. The A.T.A. local is no exception. No thorough study was made of its structure and operations. These did not seem to be the Study Group's business. Some discussions did reveal, however, the great difficulty of achieving a really active and fully involved organization. Nevertheless officers and committees seem reasonably active. The Beaver Express, in 1974-75 at least, was an interesting and one would think a morale boosting publication. Those principals and teachers who give leadership in a variety of ways, involving much time and travel, are to be commended.

Close liaison between board, administration, and teaching staff is most desirable. What teachers think and say about their employer is a large factor in the development and retention of morale. Lack of knowledge leads to suspicion and misunderstanding. Every attempt should be made to have staffs, especially principals, feel that they are part of the team, and to the extent possible, actually be such.

To this end, in addition to the earlier made suggestion that copies of board minutes go out to schools, it is recommended that, as is done in other jurisdictions such as in the city of Edmonton, a representative of the A.T.A. local be present at board meetings with some privileges of participation. Here again distance and expense become factors. There might be an understanding that the appointee would be from one of the nearer (a purely relative term in this case) schools.

Who would pay the expenses? Perhaps,

division and A.T.A. Local jointly.

An unresolved problem about which the Study Group found itself completely without solution is that of substitute teachers. Hardly any Northland community has anyone qualified to take over a classroom when a teacher is ill or away for some necessitous reason. Low teacher-pupil ratios are some relief making doubling up less difficult. Facilitators may be of value in pre-arranged situations. About all that can be said is that this is another burden Northland and its teachers have to struggle with as best they can on an ad hoc basis and which adds its bit to the aggregate of difficulties and inconveniences.

There exists within the Alberta Teachers Association the Specialists Council on Inter-Cultural Education, a group having a special interest in schools where two or more cultures impinge. The native schools of Northland come within its scope, as demonstrated by the fall gathering attended by one member of the Study Group. The Study Group was pleased to learn at the time of its last visit to Peace River that two members of the supervisory staff of the division are executive members of the Council, one being secretary, that the A.T.A. local subsidizes in some degree the attendance of some teachers and that the division has made available some tangible assistance for a limited number of teachers to belong and attend.

Principals

Regarding school principals, the greatest need is for more continuity. It is bad enough for there to be much changeover of staff, much worse for principals to be so frequently changed. The principal is a key figure in the effective operation of a school. He must have a pride in it, a sense of dedication and of its being a part of himself.

The principals themselves, when interviewed, stressed chiefly the following points:

1. They felt over-worked, especially in terms of administrative effort, paper work, reports which in every sort of institution seems to be on the increase. They are under the impression that in the sorts of communities in which they are they are involved more than normally in special cases and problems. Then also they are consulted by many visitors, governmental and otherwise, who come to the communities for all sorts of purposes, taking up their teaching and administrative time.

2. They were of the view that their letters, messages, orders, requests were often not attended to. This may not, in many instances, have been the case, but if there is no acknowledgement, reply, advice, or some kind of communication, they feel that they are neglected or overlooked. From the morale standpoint, every effort should be made at head office to keep the principals in the know about what is happening regarding matters, large and small, that affect their schools.

3. They are not consulted sufficiently in a group sense about the operations of the schools. In this regard they are no doubt pleased, as reported in The Beaver Express, that a principals' meeting was to be held in June to discuss term-end matters and to consider plans for 1975-76.

The important thing is for the administration to be sensitive to these feelings and within reasonable bounds to take such cognizance of them as is feasible. The cooperation and goodwill of the principals are factors of utmost importance.

Two items relating to principals which arose occasionally were:

a) how might term-end records be improved, or be effected at all, to facilitate transfer of command and improve school opening effectiveness; and

b) should principals be at their schools for some period prior to school opening to get better organized?

As for the first, it would appear that much remains to be done. This may be a subject for discussion at principals' meetings such as the one referred to above. How do you get a principal who is leaving the division to prepare extensive reports and records before he leaves? Simplified forms and procedures are needed, but most of all principals who remain. As for the second reference is made thereto elsewhere in this report.

Mention has several times been made of the factor of continuity. In both Manitoba and Saskatchewan the turn-over is very much less, principals remaining for much longer periods in their schools. Why this should be is difficult to establish. One can only comment that it is the case, no doubt brought about by a number of factors and influences. A trip by some Northland officers to look into this with some thoroughness might be profitable.

Native Teachers

A most logical question, or group of questions, to arise concerned the place of teachers of native origin in Northland's schools. Why are there not more native teachers on Northland's staff? How can more native teachers be obtained? Would native teachers, especially those understanding and able to employ a native language, be more successful than non-native teachers?

At the time of visits to the schools, only two teachers were identified as being native. One was employed as a special class and remedial teacher.

The number of teachers of native origin and competent in a native language is very small. No precise figure is available. The number of schools in which native children are taught, including all schools on or serving reserves, is very much larger than those of Northland only. Hence if a native teacher is interested in teaching in a native school, the choice of school or of school jurisdiction is large. Further many native teachers are of different linguistic background, Blackfoot, Blood, Stoney, and others, and hence if use is actually to be made of linguistic competence, the school should not be one of the Cree or Chipewyan tongue. The Study Group is satisfied that there does not currently exist any significant pool of native teachers to be attracted or employed.

One point made very clear to the Group by native and other people interested in increasing the number of teachers of native background was that there must be no intention and expectation that such teachers will teach in native schools. If and when certificated they must be eligible to teach, and be free agents to teach, in any Alberta school. There must be no indenturing or discrimination. The effect of this view, which cannot be gainsaid, is that if special programs are devised to facilitate the entry of native young people into teaching, it cannot and must not be assumed that they will be available to teach in native schools, although some things might be done to encourage them to do so. Any such programs must be deemed, then, to exist for the purpose of advancing the prospects and opportunities of the individuals participating, and only quite secondarily as a means of developing a pool of native teachers to serve native schools.

In so far as the public meetings were concerned, rarely, if at all, was the question of employment of native speaking teachers raised. Perhaps the persons present were quite aware that few such teachers exist. There was certainly no contrary view, no opposition to the idea of native teachers. It just did not seem to be a concern.

The University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, have developed, or are in the process

of developing, teacher education programs having two components:

a) special matriculation, or in lieu of matriculation entrance requirements which enable a native student of demonstrated competence to enter a program even though not strictly qualified; and

b) involvement of native schools, communities, and people in the programs, parts of which will be pursued off-campus in a native setting. This part of the program is, or may be, available to non-native students having a cross cultural interest.

The program with which the University of Alberta is associated, called Morning Star, will have part of its activities pursued at the Blue Quills school near St. Paul. It is understood that some discussions are in progress which might lead to some form of interim certification after two years. This would greatly ease the transition of a student and enable him to discover whether he wished to dedicate himself to teaching at an earlier stage in his period of training. An ultimate four years would still be required for full certification.

The University of Calgary program involves a relationship with several Indian reserves and with the A.V.C. school at Grouard.

The Study Group commends these interests and developments seeing various benefits for the individuals and also better white-native understanding and cooperation. At the same time, it does not see that these efforts will result in the immediate future in much alleviation of the actual teacher supply available to Northland. An occasional such teacher may be recruited but this will be insignificant in relation to total need.

Obviously the greatest need if more native young people are to become teachers, whether in native schools or not, is an increase in the number of them graduating from high schools and seeking higher education. This is equally true for other professional occupations.

A matter of some touchiness was occasionally raised, perhaps most often by teachers. This was as to the acceptability of native teachers in native communities.

As with any question touching human relations, much depends upon the personalities of those involved. Generalization is always dangerous and may be unfair.

Some doubt has been expressed that a native teacher should return to his home community. There are often local tensions and the teacher may inevitably be linked with one side or faction. Having been away at school and developed new habits and ideas, the teacher may be identified with the "others" and be in less rapport than may be initially expected. He has to try at one and the same time to be part of two societies, which may be very difficult. Further, he will now be in possession of a substantial income by community standards, and live in a superior home, albeit a divisional mobile, which will display his differences from rather than his similarities to his home community. Most of these will also apply if he enters another native community.

Will such factors negate the benefits that may accrue from his better understanding of those among whom he works and his ability to converse in their own or traditional language?

As said above, it is dangerous to generalize, but it must be recognized that a native teacher entering a native community to teach does not necessarily have it made. Careful placement is necessary as in the case of any teacher being assigned to a school.

Cross-cultural Education

From time to time it has been suggested that teachers engaged to teach in Northland should have, or undergo a quite special sort of

training, something more than a limited orientation, although in essence that is what it would be on a greater scale. It would encompass intercultural education studies, some knowledge about the Cree language and the problems of thinking in English from a Cree background, historical and cultural material related to native peoples, current problems, a considerable range of studies designed to produce teachers more able to achieve rapport in their schools and communities. Such a program would require a considerable amount of pursuit in native locales.

The Study Group has every sympathy for such a program, though perhaps not convinced that every graduate of it would fit in and be successful. Personality is usually of greater importance than knowledge or theory.

In any event it seems unrealistic at present to expect that any large number of trainees could be found to undergo the additional training. Heavy subsidies for program and training allowances would be necessary. In a free mobility society there is no assurance that teachers so additionally trained would enter Northland's service, or remain very long.

The current programs at the University of Calgary and the Morning Star program involving the University of Alberta should first be given a chance to demonstrate whether they can achieve results, especially in the direction of effecting an integration of normal university programs and native cultures and locales.

Para-professionsls

Regarding para-professionals, teacher aides and counsellor aides, the division has its own training program comprising sequential summer sessions offered at Grouard. Every such person engaged is expected to attend prior to the commencement of service. This cannot always be counted upon; the appointee simply cannot go for personal or family reasons; a vacancy occurs and an appointment is made at the last minute, or during the year.

The Study Group attempted to elicit from para-professionals in the schools some views about the Grouard courses, but found most of these persons to be very taciturn on this and other subjects. The program is deemed by the Study Group to be desirable and necessary.

Currently there is in prospect, also at Grouard, a cooperative effort between the University of Calgary, which has developed a special section and service to encourage education among native peoples, and the division which will enable para-professionals to get college credit for some summer work done and to make some progress towards improved career potential. The Study Group welcomes such programs and experiments.

As an aside a recurrent theme arises here again. The staff of Northland finds itself involved in a multiplicity of activities and operations completely foreign to those of other divisions and counties. The recruitment, training, supervision and other involvements affecting para-professionals take time, energy and planning. To the extent that they have to be done, and are done effectively, they encroach upon availability to perform other functions. Direct comparison of Northland's circumstances, in respect of supervisory staff for example, is most unfair.

CHAPTER TEN

## Supervisory Staff

The present central office supervisory staff responsible for the administration of the educational program in Northland consists of five people. They are an acting superintendent, an assistant superintendent, a supervisor of instruction, a supervisor of student personnel services and a director of the Early Childhood Services (ECS).

The acting superintendent is provided by the Department of Education on a temporary basis and does not reside in Peace River but commutes on a weekly basis from Edmonton. He is expected to be replaced by a school board appointee within a reasonable length of time after this report has been submitted to the Minister.

The acting superintendent is responsible for the administration of the educational program. All other members of the supervisory staff are either directly or ultimately responsible to him. He reports to the chairman of the board who is also chief executive officer of the system.

The assistant superintendent is a board appointee and employee residing in Peace River. He works very closely with the superintendent and in his absence provides full direction in educational matters. On a day-to-day basis the superintendent and his assistant share some functions to provide a continuous central office presence during periods when travel keeps one or the other away. Other functions have been assumed specifically by one or the other.

For the first time during the 1974-75 school year Northland had a supervisor of instruction. Initially, he was stationed in Desmarais and was to have a prime responsibility for instructional consultations with teachers in five schools in and near Desmarais. However, during the school year he was increasingly required to provide service on a system-wide basis and ultimately he was transferred to the central office in Peace River. He answers directly to the superintendent but is reported to work closely also with the assistant superintendent.

The supervisor of student personnel services is also stationed in Peace River and has been in the service of Northland in this capacity for several years. He reports to the superintendent and maintains a close relationship with the assistant. He has major responsibility for the counsellor aide program, special education classes, testing programs and the Post Northland Program. This last program focuses on students who leave Northland for a high school education and provides assistance to them within the scope of the available resources. He is also required occasionally to provide counselling to teachers who find the situation more than they bargained for.

The Study Group formed the impression that delineation of functions among the above was not always as clear as desirable. Some interrelation of functions is inevitable and the Northland organization has been somewhat fluid recently for various reasons. When a reorganization is effected there should be an attempt to specify functions as clearly as possible, including any that may be shared.

Another new supervisory position for the 1974-75 school year was that of director of the ECS program. Northland introduced this program in September 1974 and the school year saw continual expansion. The director, for personal reasons and by agreement with Northland, resided in and worked from Edmonton, but moved to Peace River towards the end of the school year.

The major function of this position is to implement and administer the ECS program. It includes such activities as community surveys and liaison, recruitment and selection of native speaking, non-certificated, local personnel who can be trained as ECS instructors, assisting in

their training, acting as consultant to ECS instructors and local advisory committees, preparing a montly newsletter and looking after administrative details.

The director of the ECS program reports directly to the superintendent.

An interesting and significant innovation during this past school year has been the employment of facilitators as part of a program funded by the Educational Opportunities Fund. While their role is not supervisory in the normal sense, they provide an assistance to teachers which should be mentioned here.

Facilitators are chosen from among experienced, successful teachers in Northland and are required to provide concentrated, longer term assistance primarily to teachers new to Northland. They visit a teacher for periods of several days and become deeply involved in the work of the teacher, helping this person to adjust to a new situation, to understand the pupils, to plan relevant work and to develop teaching methods and materials appropriate for the situation. On occasion, facilitators take over a classroom to permit the regular teacher to participate in inter-staff visitations or other orientation and developmental activities.

Two such facilitators were engaged for the school year 1974-75 and the Study Group is advised that seven such positions have been authorized and may be filled for the coming school year. It is understood that a careful evaluation of this program, which is supported by the Educational Opportunity Fund, will be instituted.

The Study Group was frequently told, particularly by teachers, that the supervisory staff of Northland is inadequate in number. While teachers generally spoke positively about the people in existing positions, they were resentful that they so seldom saw anyone from the central office, and that so many visits were so short as to have little meaning in supervisory terms. While it is acknowledged that some visits might never have occurred if they hadn't taken place as a quick stop on a flight to some other spot, the result was a feeling of frustration on the part of many teachers starved for both social and professional contacts and anxious to discuss their many problems.

Other teachers complained of almost total neglect, not getting even enough short visits to make them feel that they are a part of Northland.

From the point of view of the supervisors, the Group was told that when they make visits to isolated communities, which includes almost every school in Northland, the following priorities are imposed on them by teachers. First, teachers insist on dealing with problems related to life support systems in schools and teacherages. Next, the visit provides a social contact for people who live in isolation. Finally, only after these needs are met, are teachers prepared to discuss educational matters and concerns. The experiences of the Study Group generally support this assessment.

In addition to many individual and staff suggestions that central supervisory staff be enlarged, the Study Group was urged in several briefs, including one from the ATA Local, that additional personnel be engaged. One brief suggested that Northland should have a specialist in intercultural education on staff. Another brief suggested that the uncertainties of northern education would justify the employment of a research officer who could produce some objective data for decision-making.

While not denying that the comparable school systems in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan enroll a much larger number of students, the Study Group is nevertheless inclined to feel that both systems have more adequate and realistic supervisory staff in terms of number and coverage. These are described elsewhere in this report.

The Group's observations, too, led it to believe that many supervisory services in Northland have been and are inadequate. A heavy reliance is placed on school staffs to determine local school policies, local needs of supplies, equipment, instructional resources, library books, and other such items and to order these things in sufficient time and quantity. They must do this largely without much direction or assistance from central supervisory personnel. Tremendous differences were found from school to school in the manner in which they were operated, supplied and equipped. This seems to indicate a lack of sufficient central direction.

Other factors which contribute to the conviction of the Study Group that additional supervisory personnel are required have been described elsewhere, but they include the following: (a) large staff turn-overs create special supervisory needs; (b) time-consuming travel difficulties make supervisory personnel less effective than they might otherwise be; (c) there arise social and morale problems; (d) teachers need additional supervision and assistance to ccpe with the special needs of native children in northern communities.

If additional supervisory staff is to be employed the question must then be whether these people should be generalists or specialists. In most normal school jurisdictions the emphasis would undoubtedly be on specialists. It is not suggested that Northland could not use specialists. None-the-less it is recommended that any additional, permanent, supervisory staff be primarily generalists in their professional preparation. The neat division of responsibilities usually possible in most school jurisdictions is impossible here. A supervising visitor must be prepared to cope with a very wide range of problems when he visits an isolated school because the next visit by a colleague may be long in coming. The emphasis must be on generalists, or at least on people who have a wide background of experience and education in addition to an area of specialization.

When an apparent need for a specialist supervisor arises, as it certainly will, it is recommended that such a person be engaged on an experimental, fixed-term basis. This will provide the division with an opportunity to assess the viability of each kind of specialist service considered by the system and permit easy termination of any service found unsatisfactory for any reason.

With respect to specialists it must be kept in mind that the Department of Education has an extensive consultative staff available to schools through its regional offices. Northland is served by two of these, the Edmonton office and the Grande Prairie office. The Edmonton office has a school visiting staff of from 15 to 20. During 1974-75, due in part to promotion by the superintendent, of schools somewhat more use than previously has been made of regional office consultants. Still further use should be encouraged and arranged. Extensive use of the regional office staffs reduces the need for the employment of specialists by the division.

The director of the Edmonton office indicated that while each of his field staff has a specialty and normally goes to a school in connection with that specialty, he is expected to have a breadth of information such that he can also be useful when at a school in a variety of other ways also.

Consideration of the actual supervisory staff deemed desirable for Northland must begin with the superintendent of schools. The prime purpose of the organization is an educational one and it seems proper that the first officer in the division be an educator. Elsewhere, it was recommended that the chairman of the school board not be chief executive officer. It is now recommended that the superintendent of schools be the chief executive officer and that all other employees of the school division be

responsible, directly or indirectly, to him. He in turn would be accountable to the school board.

This arrangement places a great deal of responsibility on the superintendent but the system of accountability would be superior to the present arrangement where the chief executive officer is accountable to a body of which he is the chairman. The kind of check and balance this arrangement will give between the superintendent, as chief executive officer, and the chairman of the board, as spokesman for the legislative authority, does not presently exist.

As chief executive officer the superintendent would have final responsibility for both the educational and business affairs of the division. This is a common pattern in Alberta education and entirely consistent with general management practice. The incumbent must be a very competent person with high personal integrity. No effort should be spared in finding a suitable person.

The next person in the supervisory line of authority should be an Associate Superintendent for Educational Affairs who would direct the day-to-day activities of the supervisory staff. Since it is proposed that the superintendent of schools take on a new, higher level function, the holder of this office would essentially be the equivalent of the present superintendent.

Four people would report directly to the associate superintendent. These are the supervisor of pupil personnel services, the director of ECS programs, and two assistant superintendents. There exist already the first two positions and one assistant superintendent. It is proposed that a second assistant superintendent be hired. The role definitions of the first two positions already exist and are satisfactory. The two assistant superintendents should probably specialize to some extent, one in instructional programs and the other in personnel administration (particularly in the administration of professional and para-professional personnel in schools). This division of duties, however, should not be so well defined that one assistant could not fill in for the other as required. An arrangement of this kind may have certain difficulties in it and great care would be required to select people who can work together well.

There is now one supervisor of instruction who reports to the superintendent, while working closely with the assistant superintendent. It is proposed that this person report to the assistant superintendent having major responsibility for instruction. While the facilitator program is still in effect, one supervisor of instruction stationed in Peace River is probably adequate, at least until such time as the other changes in supervisory staff can be made and their overall effect on the system can be evaluated.

If and when the facilitator program terminates, since its funding is presently on a temporary basis, two alternatives should be considered. If the facilitator program was successful and its continuation would help meet the supervisory needs of the system, then the program might be continued at the expense of the general operational budget. The alternative to such a continuation might be the employment of additional supervisors of instruction. These could be stationed nearer the schools assigned to them and might be located at such places as Fort McMurray, High Level and Wabasca.

One factor which should be taken into account at the time that a decision between these alternatives is necessary, and consideration is given to the number of personnel required in whichever program is selected, is the teacher turnover situation. Should Northland be successful in stabilizing its staff to some degree there may be need for fewer facilitators or supervisors of instruction than have been suggested here.

While the foregoing suggests that greater staff stability might result in decreased supervisory needs, and the Study Group endorses such a suggestion to some degree, care must be taken not to decrease supervision too much. The Study Group was advised that Northland at one time had a more adequate supervisory staff but that it was permitted to decrease as resignations and reassignment occurred in the belief that the more highly trained teachers of today require much less outside assistance with their work. This is a questionable assumption in any school system but particularly so in Northland. In addition to checking the quality of service rendered by teachers and assisting them to provide good service, supervisors in Northland must be prepared to serve as contact people from the school system and with the larger society from which so many Northland teachers are isolated for long periods of time. Frequent visits of sufficient duration, designed to be supportive in purpose are essential to all Northland teachers and particularly to those in small schools where local professional and social resources are limited.

When the time comes that supervisors of instruction, or any other officers in the supervisory team, are being selected care must be taken not to overlook experienced teachers in Northland. There should be opportunity for internal advancement if competent and ambitious teachers are to be encouraged to stay with Northland.

Summarizing, at present the permanent supervisory staff consists of five people. It has been proposed that this be increased, not counting the superintendent of schools since he will replace an existing chief executive officer and will not be readily available for meaningful supervising duties in the field, to six permanent people. In addition there will be the facilitators previously referred to.

These people would be expected to provide supervisory services to teachers -- services which are both directive in that they advise teachers what must be done and consultative in that they help teachers to learn what must be done and decide how to do it. Their job descriptions must ensure that there is a minimum of red tape and maximum opportunity for working closely with teachers and directing the system toward its goals.

While the Study Group believes that the supervisory staff suggested and described here should be adequate to cope with most regular needs of the school system, it recognizes that from time to time Northland might undertake special programs, either on a short term basis or for longer periods of time, which may require that additional people with special qualifications be hired. It recommends that in such cases the required personnel be engaged on an experimental, fixed term basis with highly defined objectives for their performance. At the conclusion of the trial period, the program and the performance of the special employees should be assessed carefully and a decision made about the future of the program. A short-term, concentrated effort to upgrade a certain service might be sufficiently successful to enable the regular permanent staff to take over the longer term supervision of it.

The Study Group wishes to suggest one example of such an arrangement. Elsewhere this report describes the concern it has about school libraries in Northland. It is recommended that a supervisor of libraries be engaged on a fixed term basis of two years to improve the situation. Since there are no well developed, sophisticated school libraries in Northland, nor is there much prospect of many such libraries being developed, care must be taken to hire someone who has a practical approach to problems and who has a reputation for getting things done -- a specialist who is able to work effectively with teachers regarding quite elementary techniques.

The Study Group was interested to learn at

the time of its last visit to Peace River that it was expected that one of the new facilitators referred to above will probably be assigned special responsibilities regarding school libraries. Depending upon the person this may be a satisfactory way of dealing with this matter. While the Group's recommendations envisaged something a bit different it takes no exception to this alternative.

It was also learned at the same time that the board had given approval for the employment of a person of native background to assist the supervisor of pupil personnel services especially in the area of assisting high school pupils enrolled in high schools of other jurisdictions. Many of these pupils encounter problems related to housing and to a variety of personal and educational aspects. This person would, in effect, be a counsellor-aide with a roving commission.

The Study Group envisaged a home placement officer as found in Manitoba but again is quite content to see the proposed solution tried.

In this regard one of the problems facing Northland has arisen in respect of this appointment. An appointee was found and installed in the position, a native person possessing the required attributes. She did not stay long, to the sorrow of the divisional officers, apparently because of a sense of lonliness, of being too much in a new and different environment. This, of course, is precisely the sort of feeling that comes upon many of the high school students leading to poor performance and not infrequent drop-out.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

## School Buildings and Grounds

An important part of the routine followed by the Study Group during its visits to Northland communities was an examination of the school buildings and grounds. No member of the Group is qualified to make professional assessments of buildings, either as to their construction or their lay-out of space, but the experience of Group members in assessing the adequacy of physical facilities for educational purposes is not inconsiderable.

With respect to school buildings, the overall impression which remains with the Study Group is that the situation varies greatly. The first school to be visited, Fort Chipewyan, was typical of those school buildings considered by the Group to be satisfactory for their purpose. The building contained a number of classrooms adequate for the students enrolled. It included a good-size gymnasium, an office, a staff room and storage space adequate for a northern school. This generally favorable impression was undoubtedly further strengthened by the immaculate condition of the school. Similarly, favorable comments could be made about several other school buildings including those at Atikameg, Calling Lake, Desmarais, Gift Lake, Grouard, Jean D'or, Keg River, Menno-Simons, and portions of several other schools. This is not to suggest that everything about these school buildings was considered to be entirely satisfactory. For example, Dr. Mary Jackson School at Keg River lacks a gymnasium or playroom and plans are now underway to build a suitable playroom. Mistassiniy School in Desmarais appears to be short of classrooms even though a new addition has just been completed. The main point here is that these schools appeared to meet, in a general way, the good standards of construction, finish and space that are typical of Alberta school buildings.

The second school to be visited was Fort McKay. It illustrates the opposite situation. The three classrooms are housed in two separate buildings. At the time of the visit the roof of one building had a serious leak of long standing and much interior damage had been done by rainwater. Both buildings were dirty, inadequately maintained and in great need of redecoration. The water supply was very limited and uncertain with water being hauled into the school cistern from a distant well by truck. An old unused schoolroom situated near the other buildings had recently partially burned and was a standing invitation to further vandalism. A storage shed on the school grounds had also been recently burned to the ground and the resulting debris had not yet been cleaned up. The school yard is small, uneven in grade and young tree growth was encroaching upon the open space. An open pool in the sewage disposal system was a hazard to students.

It should be noted here that a maintenance man employed by a contractor working for Northland was on the site to make some of the most urgently required repairs and some of the problems listed above have now been corrected.

While Fort McKay was undoubtedly one of the least satisfactory situations encountered by the Study Group, there were others which suggest that further upgrading of school buildings in Northland is necessary. A considerable number of schools are housed in portable buildings including A.C. McCully School at Elizabeth Metis Colony, Brewster's Camp, Chipewyan Lakes, Conklin, Garden Creek, Little Flower School at Fox Lake, Loon Lake, Nose Creek, Peerless Lake, Pelican Mountain at Sandy Lake, Steen River and Zama City. Two classrooms, one at Loon Lake and the other at Fox Lake, are still housed in old log buildings. Outdoor toilet facilities are still regularly used at Brewster's Camp, Chipewyan Lakes, Conklin, Garden Creek, Loon Lake, Nose Creek, Peerless Lake, Pelican Mountain and Steen River. Drinking water in these schools is carried by pail and dispensed, in most cases, from earthenware water coolers, and very limited

washing facilities are available.

Before proceeding with this discussion of school buildings it is appropriate to recognize the efforts which have already been made by Northland to provide adequate physical school facilities. On its formation Northland inherited a collection of school buildings which had been erected under a variety of circumstances. Some had been built by religious missions, others by Indian Affairs, still others by the Metis Rehabilitation Branch of the Alberta government. Nearly all had been built in a different age when standards of accommodation were very much lower. Northland has striven hard to improve the situation and in its efforts had had to deal with the very real difficulties imposed on it by geographic distances, lack of year-round roads, impermanence of certain communities, and high costs.

A good illustration of some of the special problems in this regard is the experience Northland had with Embarras Portage in the fall of 1974. A summer survey had shown that a one-room school would be necessary for the saw-mill community of Embarras Portage some distance southwest of Fort Chipewyan. Accordingly, a portable classroom was purchased and shipped by barge from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan, from where it was to continue by barge up the Embarras River to the saw-mill community. However, after it arrived at Fort Chipewyan, the saw-mill at Embarras Portage closed due to economic conditions in the lumber industry and the need for a school disappeared. A great deal of administrative effort and considerable funds had been expended for nothing. The building was subsequently taken to Calling Lake where one was needed for the ECS program.

In its travels throughout Northern Alberta the Study Group frequently had occasion to see physical installations operated by various departments of the provincial government. It was often struck by the disparaties between such installations and the local school operated by Northland.

Most frequently encountered were the forestry stations maintained by the Department of Lands and Forests. These stations were always well laid-out on roomy, well-developed grounds. The buildings were neatly painted, surrounded by fences, walks, driveways and other conveniences. Garages were usually supplied for vehicles. All buildings were of permanent construction and the general impression was one of importance, comfort and convenience.

More often than not the Northland school just down the road, with the usual complement of teacherages, was located on an undeveloped school yard devoid of fencing, driveways, walks, planted trees, flower beds or anything else which might make the location attractive to those who work and live there.

This feeling of disparity was particularly strong in Fort McKay and again in the Loon Lake area. At Loon Lake, the school is housed in three separate one-classroom units, two of which are portables and the third is an old log building. There is no running water in the school and outdoor toilets are in regular use. The school yard is totally unimproved. Sitting on the school grounds near the other buildings was a new kitchen trailer provided by the Department of Health and Social Development to serve the school lunch program. This trailer, lavishly equipped, including a walk-in cooler, was there to provide a facility for the preparation of a noon lunch for children who spend the whole school day in much less satisfactory physical surroundings.

This feeling that priorities were being confused was strengthened when, after leaving the Loon Lake School, the group was driven by an installation of the Department of Highways. Here a large and expensive building had been constructed to house highway equipment. The entire site was highly developed and fenced with an expensive high chain-link fence.

The group does not suggest that either of these two non-educational developments in Loon Lake was not desirable, or even essential. It merely reports a feeling of disappointment that the school in this community is inadequately housed when there is ample evidence in the community itself that money is available for certain other social services. Improvement at Loon Lake was in prospect and will be referred to later.

At the meeting held at Grovedale of the residents of Elk-South Wapiti, whose children are educated at Grovedale, concern was expressed over the condition of the school and especially the school grounds. The local school board alleged to be unable to find the funds for needed improvements. One resident pointedly asked of the Study Group how money could be found for the elaborate college structure on the edge of Grande Prairie (which had been visited by the Study Group and is somewhat monumental in scope) and a few dollars could not be found for playground improvement and equipment.

Reference will be made to only one more instance where generous funding of government activity in a northern community seems to be in stark contrast with the Northland operation. The Alberta Vocational Centre in Grouard is housed in a facility that was, for the most part, the former centralized high school in Northland School Division. It was a plant in which Northland took great pride, consisting as it did of the most elaborate buildings in the system. Since the transfer of these buildings to the Alberta Vocational Centre considerable outside work has been done. The internal roadways and parking areas have all been paved. A large multi-bay garage has been built to house the school buses and other vehicles owned by the Alberta Vocational Centre. These are a kind of expenditure that Northland could never hope to make, there being too many much more pressing needs.

Again, it is not suggested that Grouard Alberta Vocational Centre should not have obtained these improvements. We refer to them only to point out the contrasts observed by the Study Group between Northland installations and those funded by or for various departments of the provincial government.

In respect to portable buildings, both for instructional and residential purposes, the Study Group is not generally well disposed toward their use. It is true that nursing services in many northern communities are provided in trailer units. No inquiries were made about the suitability of this arrangement but most of these health trailers are used only occasionally, on those days when the nurse flies or drives in on a regular visit. It is also true that school lunch programs in some communities are serviced by kitchen trailers. In this case a new program is being expanded so rapidly that there is reluctance to wait for more permanent facilities. Neither justification of occasional use or need for great haste is applicable in Northland.

It is noted, in passing, that during the visit to Chipewyan Lakes, not to be confused with Fort Chipewyan, local residents said that they were expecting, while the winter road was still usuable, to receive three new portable buildings in the community. One was intended to serve as a nursing station, another was to be the kitchen for the school lunch program, and the third was to be a classroom for the ECS program. Since the existing two classrooms in Chipewyan Lakes were also detached portable buildings, the community is to have five portable buildings, in all likelihood all located in the same general area, none of them supplied with running water or indoor toilets, and collectively diminishing the already small playground space.

The general aversion of the Study Group toward portable buildings is aimed primarily toward the detached classroom kind of arrangement

where the total school plant consists of several portable classrooms not under one roof, where possibly one unit has indoor toilet facilities which must serve children from other units. The A.C. McCully School at Elizabeth Metis Colony is an example of this kind of arrangement.

This aversion is based on the following considerations. Such arrangements usually provide inferior accommodation. They lack common areas which can serve the entire school and staff. No matter how things are organized in the school there is a great deal of inconvenience and upleasant travel between buildings. Supervision of the school in any effective sense by the principal is difficult. This kind of arrangement lends an air of impermanence which does nothing to encourage the teaching staff to remain in a school for any length of time. Nor does it impress the local community with the commitment which the larger society has made to public education.

The Study Group does not suggest that portable buildings are never appropriate. Where only one or two classrooms are required, and particularly where the permanence of the community is in some question, no reasonable alternative may be available. Nose Creek, Brewster's Camp and Zama City may be examples of this.

Some of the school buildings in Northland consist of portable classrooms which have been joined together with added new construction, which has provided some additional ancillary spaces. These ancillary spaces usually include a common entrance and hall, some storage space and perhaps a small combined staff and school office. Such amalgamated buildings were seen at Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo Lake and Trout Lake. Similar constructions are planned in other centers including Loon Lake.

Undeniably these amalgamated buildings are better than the detached portables they replaced. The Study Group, however, was not impressed with this kind of construction. The need to incorporate existing units severely limits the freedom to plan a new unit which truly satisfies the needs of the school. There are difficulties in making permanent attachments of walls and roofs to buildings not planned to be part of a larger, permanent construction. In one such construction inspected by the Study Group, the new washroom section was separated from the former portables to which it was attached sufficiently to permit daylight through the cracks in the corners. In another construction roof leaks have developed in less than a year after completion.

The officer chiefly responsible for developing and carrying through these arrangements is no longer with the division. The Study Group sensed that present staff have some misgiving about this sort of construction. They concede also that in carrying projects forward on a basis of payment for labor and supervision with the division supplying the materials they got "out of hand". While the Loon Lake project is a bit similar it is expected that there will be better planning, better foundation, and better controls. There is entailed in this case the moving of a portable unit from East Smoky School Division, obtained at minimal cost and although expensive to move, probably an immediate economy. Nevertheless it is still questionable that there will be a long range profit, and suitability, to engage in this sort of construction.

Probably the greatest reservation about these amalgamated buildings is that they will require extensive maintenance services in the future, services which are very difficult to arrange and very expensive to provide. Any economies in the construction, if indeed there were any, are almost certain to be cancelled by greater maintenance costs and earlier depreciation of the buildings.

It must be remembered, and taken into con-

sideration, both in respect of construction factors, and in terms of functional occupancy, that Northland schools operate for much of each year in rigorous climatic conditions.

The Study Group suggests that the following general principles guide any future considerations of school buildings in Northland:

1) There must be an acceptance of unavoidable high costs in providing school buildings in Northland. The geographic isolation, the lack of local skilled tradesmen, the difficulties of transportation and the lack of competition for contracts in this part of Alberta make it inevitable that construction costs in most Northland communities will be high;

2) Any shortcuts in quality of original construction are certain to be reflected in much greater maintenance costs, let alone the frustrations and inconveniences the users of the building will experience over many years;

3) School buildings in Northland should be lighthouses within their communities. Frequently the school is the only public building in the community and its design and quality should be a constant reminder to local people of the importance which the larger society attaches to education and of its commitment to the frontier community. As a lighthouse in the community the school building must be able to accommodate school programs adequately, including those curriculum modifications suggested elsewhere in this report. Equally important, the school building must be planned to be a true community center where adult education and community recreation programs regularly bring all people into more intimate contact with the school. Such contact, hopefully, will result in greater understanding of and support for its goals in education. This last implies some degree of generosity in providing gymnasium or playroom space, which may also serve for school and community gatherings;

4) All Northland schools should be supplied with utilities and acceptable sanitary facilties. They should be equipped to offer instruction in accordance with curriculum and teaching programs recommended elsewhere in this report. They should be supplied with adequate storage space, of which isolated schools have a special need due to the infrequency of deliveries. It is highly desirable that there be as much standardization as possible of electrical and plumbing fittings, pumps and furnaces, to expedite maintenance and repair.

It is the view of the Study Group that much work remains to be done in school buildings in Northland. In some communities it is merely a matter of upgrading existing facilities to a satisfactory level. In other communities total replacement of existing facilities is required. In the former situation there may be little, if any, opportunity to integrate other government services of non-educational nature into the existing school plant. In some communities, however, there is still a possibility of opportunity to house under one roof all social services provided to the community by government and quasi-government agencies. Such opportunities should be investigated before individual actions preclude them.

The Study Group recommends that the Department of Education convene a committee for the purpose of discussing the feasibility, and the procedures appropriate thereto, of having combined facilities erected in some of Northland's communities. This committee should be representative of Northland, the Department of Housing and Public Works, the Department of Social Services and Community Health, the Department of Advanced Education, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, and the Department of Energy and Natural Resources, as required and pertinent in any situation, and any other agency that might have a relevance to a particular case.

The Study Group sees some distinct advantages in the provision of a combined facility,

especially in terms of cost, of utilities, of heating, and of maintenance. Undoubtedly, from the school point of view there may be some concerns. Architectural care with respect to location on a grounds, and as to independent access should take care of much of these concerns.

The establishment of such a committee must not be permitted to delay unduly the provision of needed or improved school accommodation.

The regular Alberta system for financing school construction is based on the premise that the general society has an obligation to provide a basic accommodation for school purposes and that school boards who wish to improve upon this basic accommodation should do so at the expense of the local people who will benefit from the improvements.

At the present time Northland follows the same procedure in meeting its building needs as any other school jurisdiction in Alberta, with one exception. As do other boards, it submits statements of need to the School Building Board for approval and receives the standard building support through the School Foundation Program Fund. Unlike other boards, however, it has no local tax base with which to finance that portion of building costs not covered by the regular buildings grants. Instead these additional costs, usually financed by long term debentures or short term bank loans, are covered by special grants given annually to Northland by the government as payments become due. In Northland these additional costs are generally much higher than elsewhere in Alberta. Elsewhere they generally constitute a small portion of the total cost but in Northland they have been known to exceed that portion of total cost covered under the S.F.P.F. regulations. A large portion of the special grant is directed toward the payment of these additional costs.

The Study Group recommends that the Department of Education give consideration to funding on a pay-as-you-go basis that portion of Northland's school building costs not covered by the S.F.P.F. This procedure will recognize that in the provision of school buildings Northland is not like other jurisdictions in Alberta and that the regular building grants cover a much smaller portion of ordinary building costs in Northland than elsewhere. This practice should result in savings on interest costs and would permit the special grants to Northland to reflect only the extraordinary operational costs of that system.

The suggestion made earlier that the Department of Housing and Public Works be represented on the proposed Northland school building committee was made for two reasons. The special problems of school construction in northern communities suggest that Northland should make use of all available sources of expertise. This department has considerable experience in constructing various government buildings throughout the north and can call upon the services of many resource people.

The second and more important reason is that the Study Group believes that serious consideration should be given to an arrangement whereby the Department of Housing and Public Works would assume responsibility for the construction of new school facilities and renovation of existing facilities. In Manitoba many new schools in Frontier Division are constructed by Public Works and turned over to Frontier on completion. In northern Saskatchewan the Buildings Branch of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan plans, in consultation with local people and educational officials, finances and builds all schools for the Northern School Board. Both arrangements were reported to be satisfactory.

The Study Group has had an exploratory discussion with the Deputy Minister of Housing and Public Works and was encouraged to believe that some potential for this kind of arrangement may exist. We recommend that this possibility

be investigated further.

In the preceding discussion, little has been said about school grounds in Northland. Many visits were made in the winter when snow lay deep and careful examination of the grounds was not possible. Nonetheless, the Study Group has no hesitation in describing the general condition of school grounds as unsatisfactory.

School grounds were seldom improved to the degree one would like to see. Most grounds were ungraded and ungrassed, some of them being covered with weeds and wild growth which in some cases included encroaching wild young trees and shrubs. A few school yards were fenced but in most cases no attempt had been made to define the school grounds and to regulate whatever local traffic there might be in the vicinity of the school. Few school yards had well constructed and maintained driveways and parking areas. Frequently, sidewalks for foot traffic were non-existent or very limited. Very few schools were graced by ornamental trees and shrubs or the presence of flower beds and decorative lawns. Propane tanks and sewage disposal fields were sometimes unfenced. In one case an unofficial road ran within ten feet of a teacherage. Some grounds were too small to provide adequate play space. In some instances there was local uncertainty as to just what did, in fact, constitute the school grounds. There should be ample size and clear delineation.

Regarding playground equipment the Study Group was pleased to find many schools supplied with good quality slides, swings, teeter-totters and other equipment, though these were sometimes in need of maintenance and repair. There were occasional suggestions at meetings that more playground equipment could be used. Some school yards boasted skating rinks and backstops for softball, sometimes erected on the initiative of a local teaching staff or community organization. In general, however, there was insufficient development of grounds for the recreational purposes of the schools and communities. This is an area ripe for development by local school committees, provided that they can obtain some funding for such purposes.

At the time of its final visit to Peace River on June 11 the Study Group was pleased to learn that the division had been assigned a substantial sum of money under the provincial government's Priority Employment Program for the purpose of improving school grounds. This program envisages the employment of local labor in the carrying forward of the projects undertaken. In the case of school grounds improvement some heavy machinery will be needed for earth moving but much can be done by manual labor-fencing, installation of equipment and the like. It is hoped that there may eventually be improvement to some 20 to 25 school grounds.

The maintenance supervisor was already preliminarily engaged in getting some projects in motion through the appointing of local foremen, an operation adding greatly to his already too heavy load.

The Study Group hopes that good results will be achieved. Much supervision and direction will be needed. It notes with some sorrow that it saw in several communities other such endeavors, such as skating rinks, which had never been finished, had never been used, and which were already deteriorating.

It is one thing, also, to have a mass attack of this sort with grounds being improved. It is another to keep them up. Unless fences are repaired from time to time, grass and weeds cut, and equipment maintained, the whole can shortly become a sorry sight again and the original investment be wasted.

The ultimate aim should be to provide every Northland school with a spacious, level, grassed school ground, surrounded by a fence,

and supplied with suitable playing areas such as softball diamonds with back-stops. There should be adequate provision for both foot and wheeled traffic around the school and some effort should be made to beautify the immediate surroundings of the schools.

Responsibility for implementation of this plan should rest with Northland which may proceed as seems most feasible in the light of any future arrangements which may be made for construction and maintenance services.

Finally in this regard it may be said that school grounds improvement, while of great importance in itself, is only one aspect of a much larger concern, that of general community improvement. This is beyond the scope of this study and report but obviously many communities are in great need of a general uplifting in respect of planning and services.

CHAPTER TWELVE

## Teachers' Residences

With few exceptions, Northland School Division operates schools in communities where private housing or any form of rented accommodation is not available to teachers. There is no prospect of this condition changing in the foreseeable future.

No Northland teacher, unless there be some unusual circumstance, can be expected to erect his own dwelling. Several reasons might be cited as to why this is so, the predominant one being that few teachers are likely to look forward to a long tenure of service in a particular school. Building costs are high. The investment would be a highly risky one. Title to land is not possible at present in Green Zone areas in which most Northland schools lie.

There have been, and are at the present time, a very few teachers who own their own mobile homes and choose to live in them. They thereby save rent and presumably build up an equity in a personal possession. The division cannot count on this happening with any frequency or regularity.

The division, for reasons which were relevant, even compulsive, at the time, and which are by no means irrelevant now, has attempted to care for the housing of its teachers chiefly through the provision of mobile homes. These homes are established in a semi-permanent fashion in much the same way as are privately owned mobile homes on residential trailer or mobile home sites in or adjacent to towns and cities. They are normally hooked up to some sort of water and sewer service, and are supplied with power. In some cases prefabricated homes have been erected on permanent foundations having the design of a more standard type bungalow. Several new mobile homes are to be purchased and located prior to the 1975-76 school year to accommodate the increase in teaching staff. The total number of residences is some eighty-six, a very considerable operation.

Many, perhaps most, mobile home type residences have been fitted with a closed porch which can be used for storage and which serves to give additional protection from wind and snow. Heating is usually supplied by way of propane, which also supplies the school, there being a contract with some supplier to keep the tanks replenished. The supplying of fuel to these isolated communities is very expensive but no alternative exists. Wood abounds in the area but no teacher, nor school janitor, can be expected to use such fuel today.

The division furnishes the residence with furnace, kitchen stove, refrigerator, washing machine, dryer, tables, chairs, beds, chesterfields, dishes and other essentials.

As may be expected, the quality of the residences and furnishings, and their condition, vary considerably from one to another depending upon age, size, care by occupants, and extent and recency of servicing and maintenance.

The housing is subsidized, i.e. although the teachers pay rent it does not fully cover the cost of provision and give a return on the investment. Utilities are supplied within the rental package. As indicated above, fuel, propane or oil, is expensive to supply. If each tenant had to pay for his own, the cost would deter him from living, or continuing to live, in the community whose school he serves. Furniture has to be supplied. Moving personal effects in and out of the communities, or many of them, is prohibitive.

From time to time there is an adjustment upwards of rental rates as costs, and salaries, rise. Notice has been served of the possibility of such an increase effective in 1976. The practice of the division in this respect is to put the matter before its Teacher-Board Advisory Committee, a group whose members are nominated

by the A.T.A. local and the board. Its advice does not have to be accepted by the board but the procedure assures that the teaching staff are consulted in this matter which is of much interest to them.

Where more than one residence is required the normal pattern is for two, three or more mobile homes to be placed side by side, with a space of limited proportion between them, not far from the school itself and on the school grounds.

The reasons for this arrangement are obvious:

1. The division owns or has access to a parcel of land;

2. The immediate presence of the residences acts as a deterrent to vandalism in communities where police and other such restraints or influences do not exist;

3. The teachers have such benefits as accrue from proximity to one another.

4. The most compelling reasons, however, are the economics, and the logistics, of supplying services, hooking up power, connecting to water and sewer, providing roads and the like. Water and sewer are especially a problem, both as to original provision and to maintenance of service. Terrain is frequently difficult; low temperatures have to be contended with. Dispersion would add to the probability of installation and servicing problems. No statistics were kept during the visits but it can be said that some absence or defect of water and sewer service was encountered on a not inconsiderable number of occasions.

As has been stated elsewhere, there is no single factor that can be identified as having primacy in respect of the disaffection of teachers, or in reducing their length of service in a particular school or in the division as a whole. It seems patent, however, that housing is not an inconsiderable one of these factors. If a teacher, or family, is not reasonably content with the available housing other pastures are certain to look greener. Most people in the society with which teachers identify consider living accommodation to be one of the major components of enjoyable living.

How good is Northland's housing? Good is a relative term. By comparison with the housing of most of the people in most of the communities served, it is of a high level. This in itself may be the cause of jealousies, resentments and lessening of rapport between the school and the community. Here and there a principal or teacher has managed, in limited degree, to bridge the gap. In the main, what seems to happen is that members of the community, or a few of them, come into the teachers' residences for coffee or a chat, but the reverse almost never happens. The housing contrast may well be the critical factor.

Few Northland teachers appeared to be suffering in respect of housing, occasional discomfort perhaps, or inconvenience, but in contrast to the "teacherages" of Alberta in the 30's, well-housed indeed.

It must be remembered, however, that now the generality of teachers are, or regard themselves as, middle class people with middle class expectations in respect of housing, including some attention to the aesthetics thereof. If these expectations are not met they will tend to go where that probability is greater. The nature and quality of housing available to, and enjoyed by, teachers generally has advanced enormously during the past decade or so. Northland is in a competitive situation in this respect.

What can, or should, Northland do? Possibilities range from modest improvements to quite substantial changes. Ultimately these translate into a financial component.

What were the chief complaints, or suggestions of teachers?

1. There should be more frequent examination and attention in respect of maintenance.

2. Residences are too close together. It must be kept in mind that the school community is largely a closed community. Teachers are together throughout the day. Social activities, if pursued, must be largely with one another, but some privacy is desired.

A couple of voices urged the removal of residences away from the school grounds to still further lessen the sense of being tied to school and school staff twenty-four hours a day. It is doubted that this is a common feeling, having regard to the contrary considerations.

3. Too limited attention is given to factors of an aesthetic nature, or combined aesthetic and useful, for example:

a) properly constructed roadways in and out of housing groups, and individual homes;

b) sidewalks, -too much mud to traverse;

c) fenced properties, with fences that are not only serviceable but also decorative;

d) landscaping, including shrubs and flower beds. The latter should be minimal considering that the teachers in the spring will not be there during the summer and may not be there in the fall. The question, perhaps, really is as to whether the division should assume some responsibility for custodial care of such beds, including some at the school itself, as is frequently done in respect of public buildings, hospitals and the like. An incoming teacher would be heartened to arrive and find attractive surroundings;

e) attachment of porches to mobile homes which in some instances leaves much to be desired resulting in a shacky appearance. No doubt some of this arises from the employment of relatively unskilled labor but the result is not conducive to sense of pride on the part of the occupants. The same often applies to the skirting of the units, sidewalks and other instalations.

4. Teachers forced to live together. The division has a dilemma in this matter. In general, it expects to have double occupancy of a unit. There is no problem when husband and wife both teach in the school or a married teacher and family live in a unit. The division seeks to find, and is happy to find, such persons. Problems arise when two single persons are employed and must share a unit. The number of occasions in which full compatibility results when total strangers are required to occupy the same unit must be small. True, each has his own bedroom, but otherwise there is joint use and the necessity of cooperative living.

The opportunities for clash are many, differences in age, in temperament, in habits of many sorts, in attitude towards level of spending for food, in concepts of cleanliness and order, in degrees of talkativeness and reticence, in kinds of music enjoyed. The list is endless.

The Study Group encountered, by observation or volunteered information, cases of profound imcompatibility of joint occupants. These persons stated that they could not endure another year of their current arrangements. "Either he (she) or I must go."

It may be observed further that the necessity of sharing a residence limits the division's choice in recruiting. If a male or female teacher has already been engaged, another of like sex must be found to complete the housing complement. No doubt this is also a factor in the division's practice of deferring actual assignments to schools until very late in the summer. Teachers must not only be placed

appropriate to teaching posts but also as to residences.

The desirable changes or improvements to be implemented in an ascending order of necessity, and financial feasibiltiy, would seem to be:

1. Improved inspection and maintenance of residences, including more frequent visits by artisan or handyman personnel. This combines with a similar recommendation regarding schools;

2. Serious attention to grounds, roadways, sidewalks, fences and general landscaping;

3. Attention to skirting, porches and any other ancillary attachments to insure that they are aesthetic as well as useful;

4. The provision of personal units for teachers without spouses;

5. The gradual replacement of mobile units, which will always have a sort of built-in psychological effect of impermanence about them, by homes of more traditional style, whether prefabricated or built in site, properly painted, and aesthetically set in a planned situation. Log exteriors have been suggested but the Study Group has no strong views on this architectural aspect.

At Rae-Edzo the Study Group observed the residences occupied by teachers including style, location and setting. The members were entertained in one of them. In total the effect was a quite favorable one. Strictly speaking the houses are not teachers' residences. They are rented from the local housing association. They are considerably dispersed and are much more attractive than those available to Northland teachers. Teachers and native families are interspersed.

The effecting of such an arrangement would require much more than action on the part of a school authority such as Northland since there is much broader community and governmental involvement. The essential point is that a superior form of housing is available to teachers. Rae-Edzo has a relatively stable teaching staff. Good attractive housing may well be a factor.

In this respect, mention is again made of the very attractive installations of the Forestry Service, and of the residence group at one of the Indian Affairs schools visited.

The Study Group is aware that the division has had its problems with some teachers, and perhaps especially in relation to the leaving of residences in an unhappy and unprotected state at the end of the school year. This charge must not be directed towards all teachers. Again no solution is in evidence but,

a) If principals had a greater continuity of service, their availability and influence would be a counteracting factor;

b) If more teachers were returning there would be fewer occasions of irresponsibility;

c) If teachers' attitudes towards the division were more positive, more one of belonging, or of having belonged, their behavior at the time of leaving would surely be more favorable and less irresponsible.

It is reitereated that above all else, Northland needs a better, and a more permanent teaching staff. Improved housing can make an important contribution to this.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## Maintenance

There was no subject about which the teaching staffs of the schools spoke more frequently and more vehemently than that of the maintenance of school buildings, teachers' residences and school grounds. There is no question but that deficiencies in this department are a significant factor in the disaffection and frustration pattern found to exist among such a large part of the teaching staff. Teachers vary greatly in their degrees of tolerance. Many accept that there are factors inherent in the situation, distance, isolation, that make it difficult for good service to be rendered. Even when this is the case, however, poor maintenance becomes a factor in the total set of considerations which a teacher weighs when deciding whether to remain for a second, or further year on the staff.

The complaints of the teachers were chiefly these:

1. That there is little regular maintenance, i.e. periodic visits to the schools by maintenance personnel to assess needs, and to attend to matters, large and small, windows, door catches, hooks, sidewalk boards, leaking plumbing, fallen fences, window blinds, needed shelves, the host of on-going needs of a building that is in constant use;

2. That maintenance is largely on a crisis basis, i.e. that someone comes only when there is a serious problem, a failure of the power plant, a failure of the furnace, a clogging of the sewer system, a leaking roof;

3. That requests for attention to matters of a non-crisis nature are met only after much delay or not at all;

4. That requests for service, whether by way of letter, or message left with someone at the divisional office, go unanswered with the principal having no knowledge as to whether his request has been received, is under consideration, or can be expected to be met;

5. That very expensive service calls are made by servicing agencies engaged by the division, often to perform a very simple, though perhaps very necessary, repair or adjustment.

The Study Group from its own observations concluded that in large measure the complaints were justified, though prepared to accept that there is a tendency on the part of some people, including teachers, to complain and to exaggerate.

There were the outdoor toilets at Peerless Lake which were completely unusable and which had been so for months. The only toilet facility available to a two room school was the outdoor toilet in conjunction with the teachers' residence which the teachers permitted the pupils, boys and girls, to use - a most unsatisfactory situation. The principal insisted that the matter had been drawn to the division's attention on several occasions but that nothing was done.

The situation referred to above was, in part, due to vandalism, itself deplorable, but some of this, regretably, has to be lived with. The teachers and pupils should not have had to suffer such lengthy consequences.

In many schools roll-up blinds were inoperative, venetian blinds hung at wry angles, sidewalk boards were loose or missing, locks and catches were inoperative, needed painting was not done, window glass was missing. Snow porches added to teachers' residences were often poorly attached and in any event seemed to be erected without the slightest attention to aesthetics, giving an impression of shackiness hardly conductive to creating a sense of pride and of desire to stay on. Much the same could be said about the grounds about the teachers' residences which gave very little evidence of landscaping, in all, a place to live in some

comfort but not a place to enjoy.

By way of contrast the teachers' residence area at Upper Hay River School (Meander River), an Indian Affairs school operated by Fort Vermilion School Division, was attractive, with painted fences, roadways, sodded lawns, generally designed to give the impression of being a place for permanent living. Undoubtedly, such involves additional expense but must surely make some contribution to the contentment of the occupants.

The quoted incidents of heavy expense for minor, or even more major repairs or attention were many. For example, the power went off in the school. The principal could not find the control panel with its circuit breakers. Eventually an electrician was brought from a distance. He located the panel in an auxilliary building, closed the circuit and went his way. Some incidents of this sort are no doubt inevitable but serve to point up the large sums paid out for charter air flights, long vehicle trips, many high priced hours, in order to keep service going.

Finally, by way of example, Sandy Lake lies 50 miles south-east of Wabasca-Demarais. It is served by a generating plant owned and operated by the division. During the period May 21, 1974, to January 22, 1975, it was serviced 5 times by a private servicing agency out of Peace River at a total cost of $4,132.02. Needless to say the plant had to be kept going but one wonders why or how there could be such huge expense involved. Fortunately power lines are expected to reach this community in the future. In fact, power seems to be penetrating the division at a pace which will mean, happily, that the division can get out of the power business.

The Sandy Lake case was discussed with divisional officers. The full details were not known. It occurred during the incumbency of the maintenance supervisor whose relationship with the division has ended. It seems clear that during that period of time there was a lack of control and an autonomy of operations that were not in the division's best interest. The situation appears to have been rectified, and in the opinion of the Study Group will be further improved if its recommendation regarding the line placement of the maintenance department is followed.

Most of the above may appear to be negative. Let it be said that it must be conceded that the servicing of many of Northland's schools is fraught with many built-in problems. There is the factor of distance, as described earlier. Many schools cannot be reached by road, or, if they can, only at certain times and with difficulty and uncertainty. Communication leaves much to be desired whether by phone or mail. Not a single school lies in a community served by any complement of service agencies, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, construction. Hence any servicing has to come from the outside, often from far away, involving time and expense. Nor are there available in the communities significant supplies of lumber, hardware, glass, parts, etc. all of which have to be brought in.
Yet, not all is bleak. The Study Group was very favorably impressed by the condition of the school at Fort Chipewyan, although the grounds needed attention. The critical factor here appeared to be the caretaker, a man devoted to his school, proud of it, with some influence over pupils, and perhaps even teachers, and competent and willing to do minor maintenance and repairs to the benefit of his school and the coffers of the division. Some other schools impressed the Group somewhat favorably also. Sometimes it was evident that a principal or teacher had some facility with screw-driver and pliers and did occasional servicing when defects offended his sense of the propriety of things. This, however, cannot and should not be counted on as the norm.

In this regard one cannot refrain from observing that there were teachers at the other extreme, those who had obviously not shovelled

snow from their own porches for weeks, or who permitted chaos to reign in their school storage rooms, ante-rooms or on shelves. This lack of attention to routine school housekeeping is difficult to understand, or to accept.

Perhaps appropos of the last observation it may be said that a number of principals alleged to be overworked. Most have full teaching loads, or nearly so; they have the administration of a school having many problems; they are the port of call and of information for all sorts of visitors, largely governmental, to the community; they struggle with circumstances and arrangements not encountered in more normal school siutations. This is a matter for another chapter.

Reverting to the matter of caretakers, in general the division's situation is a difficult one. Caretakers must be local residents who can serve their schools daily, either full or part-time, depending upon the size of school. It would normally be expected, as at Fort Chipewyan, that the caretaker would care for simple repairs such as replacing washers in faucets, putting in a fence post, replacing a defective board in a sidewalk. Northland's janitors, in the main, do none of these things. They sweep and do limited cleaning which seems to be the range of their competence or their interest. Many are not tool or maintenance oriented. Many are women, which usually means even less facility with tools. With occasional exceptions they are reported to be reliable to the extent of their perceived functions.

Eventually, especially as more native young people pass through schools such as the A.V.C. school at Grouard, there may be more competent local people about, although one may speculate as to whether, having prepared as mechanics or other kinds of artisans, they will be interested in serving as caretakers, especially of small schools.

For the foreseeable future Northland can expect to have many janitors of minimal competence with what that implies for preventive maintenance and general servicing.

What about instructional and upgrading programs for school caretakers? The idea is appealing. Actually Northland has tried it. Here again the inherent circumstance of Northland tend to minimize the results. Many do not wish to be far away from home for what seems like a long period of time. Turnover of janitorial staff means that benefit is quickly lost. A non-mechanical person cannot become instantly mechanical. The Group favors such courses to the extent that useful participation can be foreseen, but is of the view that on-the-spot help from the maintenance staff may, for the time being, be more effective. Some program in this respect should be implemented and diligently pursued.

At the time that the Study Group began its operations and for some months thereafter, the maintenance staff of the division comprised two people. The Supervisor of Maintenance was responsible, reporting to the board through the chairman, for all building programs, provision of facilities, both school and residential, all maintenance, including water and sewer (all under very difficult circumstances), power plants where operated, procuring and servicing of major equipment, the oversight of the school busing program- vehicles, operators, contractors and routes, -and perhaps other incidential tasks.

In the opinion of the Study Group, regardless of the competence of a person employed for this function, the total task is an impossible one for one person to administer and to direct. It must be kept in mind that Northland has thirty schools, not the six to ten characteristic of the ordinary school division, and these subject to the handicaps so often referred to herein. This officer must be buttressed by competent staff to whom specific functions can be delegated. He cannot give service to the schools if he, or someone on his behalf,

cannot visit them with some regularity. He cannot do justice to his office work, to school planning and to communications from the schools, if he is constantly away from headquarters.

The second person, assisting the supervisor was a practical tradesman, somewhat, the Group gathered, of the nature of a competent handyman. He had been with the division some years and was highly thought of. He served, in part, as a visitor to schools to appraise needs, and as an actual on-site workman effecting, or supervising or arranging work being, or to be, done.

During the course of the year there was appointed a maintenance man to serve schools in the immediate area of Wabasca-Demarais. His capacities, and legal authority, to attend to sophisticated equipment are limited but favorable reports were heard of his work.

The division has very limited shop and equipment facilities.

It is clear from the above that the division must rely almost exclusively on maintenance assistance from two sources:

a) locally recruited casual help;

b) tradesmen, or businesses employing tradesmen, in the several towns within the general area of the division.

The division has instituted a policy to the effect that whenever possible local labor shall be employed. This policy has two recommendations. If local labor can be engaged all that is involved is the cost of time worked. There is no expense involved for travel, or travel time. Perhaps more important is that opportunity for work is provided for persons for whom work opportunities are minimal, bringing a bit of income to the individual and to the community.

This policy is not without its weaknesses:

a) In the main the persons available, as has been pointed out in connection with janitorial staffs, are not trained in artisan skills and hence can only be recruited to do relatively low level tasks; nor are they, in the main, possessed of a varied complement of tools to perform operations with skill or nicety;

b) Materials which might be required to deal with a situation are not available in the community. Someone must determine what is needed and arrange for it to be brought in;

c) A considerable burden is placed on the principal of the school to take some part in the decisions as to what has to be done, to find someone to do it, to decide whether the work has been satisfactory completed, and to take care of the necessary vouchering, including serving as time-keeper, so that the worker may be paid.

In this last regard the Study Group heard more than once of the problem of payment. It is only natural that upon completion of his work the worker looks for immediate, or near immediate pay. Accounting practice, however, requires proper records, vouchering, approval of accounts, and issuing of cheques. Having regard to the infrequency of mail in and out of many communities, and the office processes involved three weeks or more may elapse before the worker gets his money. This is not conducive to good relations or further involvement.

No ready solution appears for this problem. The following are possibilities.

If the scheme of local boards with some jurisdiction and financial resources were to become effective some of these matters might be handled by them with cheques being issued on the spot by the local board. This is fraught with its own weaknesses in respect of efficiency and control, but might well be tried out in one or more of the larger communities.

The school principal might have some sort

of imprest account, being able to issue cheques in limited amount. Any such proposal weakens financial control and increases administrative effort. It would impose a further burden on the principal who already complains that he has so many extraneous calls on his time that he cannot be a good principal, but it is worth a try.

The Study Group recognizes the social and economic advantages of employing local help. But there is no solution to the general maintenance problem from this direction at the present time. It hopes that in some degree there can continue to be some such employment. In general except when quite competent persons have been identified and satisfactorily employed, it would seem that local labor can best be used for larger projects, such as fencing, carried forward under the supervision of a competent foreman who can oversee the work, its quality and the dispatch with which it is accomplished.

The present other source of maintenance service is the private operator who works under contract, or at an hourly rate. These persons or businesses may be involved in painting, building repairs, alterations or renovations, or in the crisis situations referred to above when there is a failure of power, water, sewer, heat or other immediately essential function.

The division does not find it easy, at times, to recruit or engage such assistance. Good artisans are scarce. Demand in northern Alberta, arising in part out of oil sands developments, is high. Costs are correspondingly high. Many Northland jobs are unattractive because of isolation, time consumed away from other work, lack of places to live during extended jobs, and other hindrances.

It is readily understood that Northland has not found it easy, and has found it very expensive, to care for maintenance.

Nevertheless, something better must be done than has been done to preserve property, to improve the aesthetics of schools and school sites and teacher residences, and to create a better climate of acceptability among teaching staffs to enhance their morale.

First there must be instituted a policy of regular inspection and of preventive and on-going maintenance. The requisite of this is enough staff to make more frequent visits to school plants, to assess needs, to establish priorities and to let staffs and principals know that someone is interested, that attention is in prospect.

As indicated above this function cannot be performed, for 30 isolated schools, by an officer who also has the task of overseeing the total buildings, maintenance and busing operations. This officer should spend almost all his time at headquarters, except for casual field visits in connection with major projects and such travel as may be required to meet with the School Buildings Board, architects, contractors, and others with whom consultations are necessary. While a knowledge of buildings and the trades is important the prime qualification must be a capacity to administer, to organize, to control, and to exercise good judgement.

Whether busing should remain a part of the work load of the person who may be titled Supervisor of Buildings and Maintenance is a question. It does not seem to fall logically anywhere else in the divisional structure. Problems and arrangements in connection therewith may well be dealt with by his staff at the time of visits to communities for other purposes. No recommendation is made for its transfer elsewhere, although this might well be done should there be some reorganization of the responsibilities of head office personnel.

The Supervisor requires to be supported by something more than a single employee, the

situation as of the fall and winter of 1974-75. There needs to be someone who, on behalf of the supervisor and under his direction, is reasonably free to visit schools not less than three times a year, for purposes of inspection, consultation, and assessment of needs. He would also perform other supervisory and organizational functions in connection with school construction, school renovation, moving of schools and residences, anything that required on-the-spot examination, direction, and decision.

A third person should also be part of the headquarters team. He would be more in the nature of a foreman, a practical operator, who would actually function at school sites, engaging local help when feasible, examining work being done by private operators, expediting the procurement of materials, going in with a helper or two to accomplish tasks of moderate duration.

What the above amounts to is the insertion of a third person between the two of the 1974-75 two man establishment, thereby relieving the supervisor so that he might become a more effective administrator and planner, and freeing the practical operator to be more active in relation to the carrying forward of actual on-the-spot operations.

Addmittedly, in the Northland situation there must be considerable flexibility of function. Visiting schools is expensive and time consuming. Any one of the three must be prepared, at times, to perform the functions normally performed by one of the others in the interest of economy of time and expense.

One observation not infrequently made to the Study Group was that visits by head office or supervisory personnel have been not only infrequent but hurried, in and out without adequate time for consultation and examination. To the extent that this is true it is very wasteful. It is expensive to get to the community. If little is done or accomplished the expense is largely wasted.

Somewhat in the same vein it was stated that when the Superintendent of Schools, or one of his staff, visited a school he was drawn into inspections and consultations about physical plant matters to such an extent that he had little time for the true functions of his visit, educational observation and advice.

Reference will be made elsewhere to the interrelations of head office personnel. A word is said here also. Under existing structure the Supervisor of Maintenance has been one of three reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer. He has operated with a high degree of independence in respect of ordering and the making of financial commitments. Since in the end it is the Secretary-Treasurer who has budgetary, accounting and general fiscal responsibility there is need for the financial aspect of maintenance operations to be more closely integrated with the total accounting process. This would presumably be achieved if as proposed in the chapter on Administrative Structure, the chief maintenance officer reported to the Secretary-Treasurer. If he should remain a substantially independent officer reporting to the chief executive ordering, contracting, and authorizing of expenditures should be processed through or in liaison with the Secretary-Treasurer or his staff.

There now is reached the most difficult part of the maintenance structure, one for which no pattern clearly emerges, i.e. who should actually perform the tradesmen functions of carpentry, painting, fencing, electrical, plumbing, heating and other processes. Should the division have its own crews, or should it continue to rely on employing help wherever it can be found? The Study Group, whose expertise in this matter may leave something to be desired, has pondered the problem at some length and has discussed it with the divisional administration.

Ideally, the division should have a crew,

or crews, of its own who could visit schools, on direction from the headquarters staff, to attend to needs, large and small as they arise, and to engage in regular routine servicing. A handyman, if really competent, at strategic points would be a great asset. The current arrangement at Wabasca, referred to above, was being well received at the time of the Study Group's visit in that area.

If the latter idea were to be pursued where could such persons be located if they could be found--at Peace River, at High Level, at Fort McMurray, at Grouard or High Prairie? No matter where located distances become great. Who takes on Nose Creek, or Calling Lake, or Elizabeth, and Fishing Lake? What about Chipewyan Lakes?

The Supervisor of Maintenance who had recently joined the division when this study was commenced, and who ceased to be with the division early in 1975, favored the employment of crews, each comprising some such personnel as a carpenter, and electrician and a plumber, who would be provided with a mobile shop or at least a repository of tools and supplies in a truck and would visit schools routinely or on special assignment. They would be strategically located, each having a region or segment of the division to service. Presumably, one of each group would have a foremanship function.

While this concept has some attractiveness there are serious drawbacks. One is that any visit, any particular project, may well have almost entirely a single trade component, be essentially a carpentry job, or a plumbing job. Do the other tradesmen sit idle while one does what is required? No doubt they could be useful to one another if willing but there is an exclusiveness about the work of journeymen which may well make jurisdictional flexibility unlikely.

Even though the plan could be made feasible in terms of cooperative effort there is still the problem of where to locate such crews. Few compact clusters of accessible schools can be found.

Living accommodation is not available for extended stays in most, in fact, almost all, the communities. There are no hotels, motels or other accommodation. This often means extensive travel, morning and evening, drastically curtailing effective work time. Occasionally, through the generosity of a teaching staff casual arrangements can be effected but these are inconvenient to all concerned and cannot, ought not, to be relied on in any regular way.

When visiting personnel are accommodated by teachers arrangements in this respect should be made in so far as possible in advance. There should be a schedule of rates established, perhaps through the Teacher-Board Advisory Comittee, applicable to sleeping accommodation and meals. This would put the matter on a basis that would avoid uncertainty and embarrassment. It should be applied to persons other than divisional personnel also.

The question has been raised as to whether Northland, or the provincial government, should have a mobile home in all or most communities to accommodate casual visitors of whom there seem to be many, -school, health, welfare, and a variety of functionaries related to services and projects. The care, supervision, allocation protection, and servicing of such a facility pose many a problem. Perhaps new schools should have a simple quest room containing not much more than a cot, where a divisional visitor might spend a night thereby extending the length and usefulness of any visit. He would bring his own sleeping bag. A hot plate, sink and a minimal supply of dishes would be desirable.

The Study Group sees no panacea for the maintenance problem. It can only see the division relying on a variety of means such as the following:

1. An increased headquarters staff of three, as outlined above;

2. Itinerant handymen, two or three, at such places as Wabasca, High Level and Peace River.

3. A small crew capable of doing carpentry, concreting, fencing, general repairs, based on Peace River but able to be dispatched for up to a week at a time to handle sizeable projects. What to do with such a crew during much of the winter may be a problem.

4. Continuation of the use of private services from the nearest service centers for much general servicing and most emergencies. It would be hoped that through better head office inspection, tighter controls and scrutiny in respect of invoicing, and improved organization generally some of this, particularly some of the very expensive crisis servicing, might be avoided or diminished.

In all, however, it must be borne in mind that maintenance has been, for a combination of reasons, at a rather low ebb and can only be put on a better basis through greater effort, organization and expenditure.

On June 12, 1975, the Study Group made a final visit to Peace River. Further and current information obtained during that visit is now being incorporated in several places in this report.

The following developments were found to have taken place:

a) The employee who was assistant supervisor of buildings and maintenance has been confirmed as supervisor;

b) The board has seriously faced the matter of better staffing and has authorized a number of appointments. These include an assistant supervisor and six tradesmen to be located in some degree regionally;

c) There has been authorized the employment of a regional handyman to be located at Gift Lake, in addition to the one at Wabasca;

d) Better shop facilities will be set up at Peace River enabling construcion of various things to be undertaken there especially during any slack periods.

The problem now is to find incumbents for the various positions, these being in short supply.

The Study Group also learned that the Wabasca handyman, referred to earlier in this chapter, had asked to revert to caretaker status. This was agreed to so the Wabasca post is currently vacant.

All the above is predicated on the assumption that Northland will continue to provide its own maintenance service. There is another possibility.

As indicated in the chapter on buildings, the Study Group interviewed the Deputy Minister of Housing and Public Works, and the officer chiefly concerned with the maintenance of buildings in the newly created Department of Government Services.* One of the purposes of the meeting was to explore the possibility of the servicing of Northland's schools and residences by the government department charged with that responsibility for government buildings. The Study Group was prompted to do this by the following considerations or circumstances:

1. As has been referred to above, maintenance in Northland has been at a very low ebb and any possibility which might lead to improvement was explored;

* The Maintenance Branch of the former Department of Public Works has been transferred to the new Department of Government Services.

2. At Grouard, where the Northland school plant is part of a larger complex including the Alberta Vocational Centre operated by the Department of Advanced Education, maintenance is handled for the whole by a resident corps of employees of the Department of Government Services. This corps is well supplied with staff, facilities and equipment. The school staff spoke favorably of the maintenance service rendered, in contrast to the general complaints voiced elsewhere. The Janvier complex is also serviced by Department of Government Services personnel from Lac La Biche.

3. In Saskatchewan, maintenance of the schools and residences of the Northern School Board is provided by the maintenance branch of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. In this manner, a single organization serves all government and government related buildings in the area.

The persons with whom the Study Group talked did not question the validity of this arrangement. Such complaint as they had related to an alleged insufficiency of staff to perform all the necessary functions promptly, a condition which would be equally true if the School Board had its own maintenance staff, but in inadequate degree.

4. The Group became aware that there were government maintenance personnel at a number of places in northern Alberta, the nucleus of a decentralized maintenance service.

In discussing this matter with the governmental officers referred to it was made clear that the Study Group had no power of negotiation and was merely exploring possibilities, which if they seemed to have any merit, would have to be subsequently pursued by way of extensive discussions bwtween the division and the government department, with a proposal ultimately being placed before the government with both the Department of Government Services and the Department of Education being involved.

The factors pointing to maintenance being taken over by the government department would seem to be these:

1. Total administration of maintenance from Peace River is cumbersome and costly. On the other hand, decentralization through the establishing of divisional regional maintenance units is not very feasible. In many or most geographical segments of the division there are not enough buildings to warrant adequate staffing and equipping of a regional maintenance unit. However, in a number of places where there is a government maintenance presence an even larger and more effective unit could be justified if the responsibility for schools were added to the existing responsibilities.

The places at which there is such a presence now which might readily serve some of Northland's schools, with more alacrity and effectiveness, are High Level, Peace River, Grande Prairie, Grouard, Fort McMurray, Wabasca, Lac La Biche, and Bonnyville.

2. As Northland is currently financed, and as it will continue to be for the foreseeable future, its maintenance costs are actually paid for from provincial funds. Financialy it would merely be a transfer of cost from one avenue of expenditure to another. For purposes of accounting there might be a charge against Northland so that its budgets and financial statements would more truly reflect actual costs.

3. The government service is more likely to attract and retain competent staff than Northland can hope to do. The recent experiences of Northland in respect of maintenance staff have been quite unhappy. What is assumed here is that there being a much larger staff, more permanent structures and procedures for recruitment, salary, determination, pension arrangements, promotions and the like a larger pool of candidates for employment can be tapped.

4. The maintenance services of the government have far more extensive contacts and business connections with suppliers and servicing agencies than Northland has or is likely to develop.

5. Regional offices can more readily examine the needs of a situation and recruit the necessary assistance than can be done from Peace River. Consider two cases. Something is reported by the principal of the school at Fort McKay to the office at Peace River by phone. He may or may not be able to reach the maintenance supervisor. A message may have to be left. The supervisor may not call back for a day or two if away on some business elsewhere. Eventually, he calls back. The problem may or may not be adequately described. He may consider it necessary to fly to Fort McKay. Once there, or by phone from Peace River if he thinks he knows what the problem is, he must try to find someone, an electrician, a plumber, a carpenter, at Fort McMurray, to go to the school. All this is slow, expensive and perhaps ineffective. If there were the possibility of direct contact with a maintenance officer at Fort McMurray this person could soon be at the school. He might come by truck with a tradesman, if necessary, complete with tools and attend to the problem. In most cases the problem could be handled by one of his own staff. If not, he is in a more favorable position to make whatever arrangements are necessary at Fort McMurray than is someone trying to effect such arrangements from Peace River.

Even the replacement of glass in a broken window becomes an operation of considerable magnitude when handled remotely; or it goes for a long period unattended to.

The schools at Elizabeth Colony, A.C. McCully and J. F. Dion Schools, have a similar remoteness even though normally accessible by road. They are 325 air miles from Peace River, about 475 miles by road. Service out of Peace River is obviously complicated. Bonnyville is within easy driving distance of both. A local officer at Bonnyville could make more frequent inspections and much more readily and quickly arrange with service agencies at Bonnyville, Grande Centre or Cold Lake to effect maintenance whether of a preventive or emergency nature.

6. One of the current complaints about Northland's maintenance is that it is almost entirely on a crisis basis. More frequent inspection of premises is one factor in changing this to preventive, or on-going maintenance. A reasonably adjacent officer with responsibility for the general upkeep of premises ought to be able to keep this sort of program more active with economies resulting from a reduction in deterioration, and above all greater satisfaction on the part of teaching staffs.

7. To a much greater extent, under the Department of Government Services system employed crews would be available, with some less necessity of contracting out to service organizations whose service and hourly charges are very high.

8. Finally, if it is true that maintenance would be at a higher level of effectiveness there should result some increment of increased staff satisfaction which is so badly needed to contribute to recruitment and retention.

There are, however, some negative factors to be considered:

1. There may be problems arising from divided jurisdiction. The schools belong to Northland but another authority, over which it has no jurisdiction, maintains them. Who determines the level and quality of maintenance? Who assumes blame for failures, delays and the like which will inevitably occur? Will there be "buck-passing"?

There are many public buildings occupied by a government department or agency which are serviced by the governmental maintenance service. This has proved to be sufficiently satisfactory

that it remains the dominant pattern. Occasional tensions may arise but these are resolved. No system operates to the complete satisfaction of all involved.

2. Some of Northland's schools are extremely isolated, Garden Creek, Chipewyan Lakes, Peerless and Trout Lake. The Department of Government Services has no government buildings or instalations to service in these places, although it might render services in connection with nursing stations. It would be taking on a new kind of situation to service. The obvious comment is that the schools there have to be serviced by someone, and as said before at ultimate expense to the government. They could be equally well and probably be better served from regional service units of Department of Government Services.

3. The trades employed by the Department of Government Services are unionized. This might necessitate sending in two or three tradesmen to care for some sort of joint operation if a plumber will not perform a simple electrical task even though he knows how to do it. Within Northland there can be utilized the handyman concept, the person who within some limited degrees of sophistication is prepared to do carpentry, concrete work, plumbing and electrical repair.

The fact is, however, according to the information available to the Study Group, that Northland has not been able to find and employ many such persons. There was the one recently stationed at Wabasca but he is deemed to be very much an exception, a rare find, and few such other persons seem to be available.

Should the Department of Government Services have responsibility for the maintenance of Northland schools and other buildings this would not preclude the use of local casual labor. That department, according to information given, is prepared to and does employ local people who have the necessary skills for work which they can do under supervision.

It is the conclusion of the Study Group that the possibility of utilizing the Department of Government Services maintenance staff and facilities should be very carefully explored by the division and the Department of Education.

Because the study, organization and effecting of such an arrangement will take some time, if implemented at all, immediate steps to improve the current situation within the division itself should not be delayed. There can be subsequent adjustment.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## Libraries, Supplies and Equipment

### 1) School Libraries

The libraries of many of Northland's schools leave much to be desired. This is true in respect of number and quality of books. Regretably, it is also true in respect of display, care and use. It seems axiomatic for any teacher or educator to say that there should be more books, of greater variety, of greater interest and relevance. Providing other conditions are met few would dispute this.

Subject to occasional exceptions it has to be said that there did not seem to be in most schools effective use of what was present. It is a moot question as to whether the mere adding of more titles would very much change the situation, unless somehow the infusion were of especially attractive books.

The fact seems to be that a very large proportion of Northland pupils, and increasingly so as they advance through the grades, are not skilled and interested readers. One is reminded of the statement made by some teachers that the readers in use are reasonably acceptable up to grade III but that thereafter the proliferation of vocabulary and the expansion of concepts become increasingly beyond the apparent capacities of the children. To the extent that it is true it no doubt leads to a dislike of or aversion to books and reading. On the other hand the availability of library books of less complication but of appropriate interest should serve in some degree as an antidote.

Many books were seen on shelves that appeared to be quite useless. It may well be that their presence is in itself something of a deterrent to using the library. One task of a library supervisor might well be, in conjunction with the teachers, to discard the completely dead wood to be found on many shelves.

The policy of Northland, not unlike that of many school systems, is to provide each school with a library budget based on the number of pupils, leaving it to the school staffs to order books within their quotas. It is reported that not infrequently the full quota is not spent. Lack of continuity of staff may well be a factor here. The impermanent principal or staff has less interest in and plan for the development and improvement of the library and its use.

The Study Group is in favor of more books in Northland's schools. At the same time it is convinced that even more important than more books, is better use of books.

There is no panacea in this respect, but there must be concern, planning, encouragement and effort. Teachers need guidance and help. In some degree they need supervision. The following seem to be essential.

1. In many schools better display and and attractive accessibility are needed. This may require shelving or other physical provisions. These should be available through improved maintenance.

Equally, there is needed better housekeeping. If a school is large enough to warrant a teacher-librarian, or part-time librarian and part-time relief for the principal, there is someone to take an interest and, in a sense, to be held responsible. In small schools the organizing and housekeeping aspects fall to the principal and teachers. Teacher-aides might be given some responsibility in this regard.

Teachers must use stimulative devices, book clubs, records of books read, competitions, special displays and reorganization of arrangements on the shelves, involvement of pupils as librarians and custodians, - each may have its bit of influence. If nothing is done by

or through the teacher books will likely be idle.

No doubt it will be said by some that they are already too busy. One can only reply that there are schools in which it is done, or is so much better done than in others that it cannot be dismissed so readily.

The Study Group believes that, in part, improvement rests with more counselling and supervision. Teachers have the right to expect that occasionally someone will be in the school long enough, and be specific enough in instruction and advice, to assist in the improvement of this very important aspect of school life.

2. Teachers, especially but by no means only beginning teachers, need counsel regarding means and devices for encouraging pupils to use books. It is a great waste for good books to sit unused. Here again there must be reliance on supervisory assistance.

3. The selection of books is a problem. It is a problem for teachers anywhere, and especially so for teachers in isolation, unable to examine prospective purchases. Catalogues and lists are helpful but not infallible. Many books get ordered that turn out to be of limited interest or value. Teachers should have the benefit of a list of books that are of special relevance and usefulness in Northland's schools, a project for the library supervisor recommended herein in cooperation with teaching staffs.

It is the opinion of the Study Group that the division would be well advised, having regard to the staffing and isolation factors, not to leave the ordering of library books completely in the hands of the teachers. Through more careful examination of possible accessions than is possible for staffs books should be selected and put into the school libraries. For a start roughly half of the library quota of funds might be through divisional head office staff, with a discretion of the other fifty percent still at the school level.

It would be hoped, especially in respect of the divisionally selected books, that greater local and immediate relevancy could be achieved. Books which are in any sense derogatory of natives and native culture ought not to be in the schools.

Each Alberta school authority has recently been granted a special, once only grant for the purpose of school library enlargement. Northland will have received this grant. Its disposition in terms of manner and directions of distribution was not known at the time of writing. Presumably, it will serve to improve most Northland school libraries to a limited extent.

In the chapter headed Supervisory Staff there will be found observations and recommendations bearing further on library services.

The question has been raised as to whether in some fashion the school library might be combined with a community library service. This is an intriguing possibility. In the current situation in most of Northland's schools and communities it probably means making the school library available to the community, with acessions developing in the direction of suitable adult books. Some community interest, contribution and service would appear to be necessary. Perhaps it must wait, if feasible at all, for the existence of some good local school committees which might become involved.

2. School and Pupil Supplies

In the matter of supplies the chief complaint encountered in the schools was that those required at the time of school opening had not arrived and that school operations were seriously handicapped. The missing materials were curriculum guides, paper, pencils, all the paraphernalia required to set school in motion and keep it operating. In Northland pupils' personal supplies, including texts, are supplied free

because of the fact that so many pupils come from economically depressed homes. The free issuance of supplies to pupils assures that the children have them which would frequently otherwise not be true.

Free issue sometimes begets lack of responsibility. No charge of general waste is made but principals and staffs must be ever vigilant to encourage the effective use of materials. As with any aspect of school administration some principals and staffs are more adept, and more conscious of their roles as conservationists than others. Staffs and students should be aware that free issue carries with it a responsibility in the direction of careful and prudent use.

In attempting to find the causes of lack of supplies, in some schools, at the beginning of the school term a number of causes were found.

1. Principal and staff turnover create problems and weaknesses in this aspect as with so many. The principal who did the ordering or requisitioning is no longer about. Records left behind are sketchy or not found at all. Orders in some cases seem not to have been submitted. Even if the ordering has been done the order does not include items which are of importance to the new staff.

2. Some suppliers experienced difficulty last year in getting supplies from their own producers or manufacturers and hence were not able to ship promptly.

3. The ever present factor of distance, together with the absence of any regular or reliable delivery service into many communities, result in delays and failures of packages to arrive. They may be at some transit point awaiting attention or instruction.

4. In many communities there is no one to receive arriving supplies. No teaching staff is on hand nor is there a caretaker who takes responsibility.

In the main supplies and books are dispatched directly to schools by suppliers according to shipping instructions received. The question has been raised as to whether it would be better for supplies to be purchased by Northland in bulk, warehoused at Peace River, assembled and packaged there, and dispatched to the schools. The Study Group is not convinced that this would be a solution to the problem. A considerable establishment would be necessary. The total process would not be simplified and supplies would still have to be sent to many schools using the same shipping instructions now given directly to suppliers.

If the division had some sort of courier service to its schools advantage might accrue. This is not likely to be the case in the near future.

The Study Group is of the opinion that the division might well have a modest stock of quite basic pupil and school supplies which during the year might be sent directly from Peace River on request from a school by letter or phone. This might result in quicker service on small needs that arise.

One of the chief suppliers to Northland's schools is the School Book Branch of the Department of Education. Discussion with the Branch revealed no special concern. Relations with Northland are stated to be good.

The School Book Branch occasionally has its own problems in getting stocks of books from publishers and being able to make full and complete shipments to schools on time. It reported that on occasion it has difficulty arising from the unusual and complicated means of getting a shipment to a Northland school. It relies on instructions from the divisional office. Sometimes circumstances have changed leading to complications. On the whole the view seemed to

be that taking into account inherent transportation and communication conditions the occasional problems arising had to be accepted and dealt with as best possible under the circumstances. No proposals for a different or revised system were advanced.

In respect of various matters it would be of great advantage to have the principal of a school at his school some time prior to its opening. This is rather standard practice throughout Alberta, the principal's administrative and supervisory allowance being deemed to cover this as a part of effective administration. It is discussed elsewhere in this report. It would be an advantage in respect of supplies, receipt, distribution, storage, and checking for presence and adequacy, for the principal to be in his school some significant period prior to opening day. Active local school committees might well play some part in this respect also.

3. Instructional Equipment

Instructional equipment available to schools and school systems has proliferated greatly in recent years. The blackboard, the book, the verbal discussion can now be supplemented by a variety of projection, listening, and electronic devices, including those which are intra-school and those which bring in the outside world in a variety of ways, especially through radio and television.

The Study Group took no inventory of such equipment. In retrospect it might have been useful to do so. In every school it observed some such equipment, sometimes in what seemed to be considerable quantity, -- slide and film strip projectors, 16 mm. sound projectors, overhead projectors, record players, tape recorders and players, radios, television sets (useful in quite limited parts of the division) and others.

The disturbing feature, insofar as its observations in almost all the classrooms of the division were concerned, was that only in an extremely few instances did it observe any of this equipment in use. One would have expected, on the basis of random visits, that if the equipment is in some sort of general use such use would have been observed. There is reason to believe that this situation prevails in schools other than Northland's also.

There is a problem of maintenance. Some equipment was not in running order; one can only speculate as to why not. Nevertheless, a major factor would seem to be lack of interest, knowledge, initiative or confidence on the part of some teachers in relation to the equipment.

The brief of the Northland Local of the Alberta Teachers' Association recommends that every school in the division, which would include a number of one and two room schools, be provided with an extensive list of equipment, comprising a total of thirty-two items ranging from various sorts of projectors, players, recorders (including Video Tape Recorder), stove, refrigerator, sewing machine, duplicators, typewriters, adding machine, and others.

Of a number of these items, including any which may ease the burden of the administrative trivia facing the principals, the Study Group is supportive. On the other hand it can only consider the total list to be unrealistic. In a quite large school something approaching the list might be warranted, but even this is questionable unless and until greater capacity and readiness to use equipment is demonstrated. The presence of it is only one of many factors leading to its use.

There are many teachers who, for whatever reasons, are not gadget and machine conscious. This may be regretable, but until they learn to use equipment, and are persuaded to exploit its usefulness its availability is no guarantee at all that it will do other than sit unused.

There is a parallel here with books, as referred to in the section on library. Books on shelves do not guarantee use. Positive steps need to be taken to promote their use. So it is with equipment.

Just as some kind of professional help, advice, encouragement, demonstration, are needed to enhance library book use, so a similar program is needed if staffs are to utilize the equipment made available to them. Here again, as has been said before, more, longer and more specifically helpful supervisory visits are needed.

The Study Group does not recommend an immediate infusion of expensive, sophisticated equipment. It does think that each school should have a basic list, graduated somewhat in relation to school size. Each teacher should have reasonable access to a record player, to a duplicator, to a tape recorder and player, to a radio, where reception of school broadcasts is feasible, to film strip and film projector, an overhead projector. Other items might also be considered relatively standard.

The fact of school life is that one teacher, an enthusiast who is to be commended for his or her enthusiasm, enjoys using and may use effectively a particular piece of equipment. But his or her successor has no such interest and the equipment gathers dust.

Some equipment should be on special supply only, from head office, returnable there, and recoverable, after its use by a specially interested party. Whether the logistics of this arrangement are feasible having regard to distances and transportation problems may be a question.

The Study Group wishes every teacher to have access to instructional equipment which he or she will use with some degree of consistency, or jointly with teaching colleagues. It cannot agree with a policy of indiscriminate provision of equipment which for the most part, according to present intimation, will stand idle all or most of the time.

The time available to teachers for the use of instructional equipment is limited. It is impossible for them to use everything available.

As has been said many times in this report, one of the greatest weaknesses of the Northland pupils is in reading competence. The Study Group would favor rather general availability of specialized equipment designed for remedial reading and improvement of reading generally. This, as with other equipment, is useless unless teachers are instructed in how to use it and are motivated to do so, which brings us back to supervisory instruction and encouragement.

Within the Study Group there was some discussion of the use of television in the schools. This is currently pretty much an academic question since TV signals are not available to most communities and schools. This may well change through the services of ACCESS or other source.

The Study Group had some intimation of the possibility of a communications system making radio and television available by way of sattelite. The Alberta Native Communications Society is involved in this project.

The Group has these observations:

1. There are doubtless possibilities in the use of television for educational purposes;

2. The effectiveness of TV when available, as with any other medium or device, depends largely upon the enthusiasm and commitment of the teacher, or staff. The mere presence of equipment and availability of programs by no means assures that they will be used, or used effectively;

3. No teacher can at one time be a devotee of the use of many media concurrently: TV, films, tapes, records, overhead projectors, video tape recording, not to mention the host of other teaching techniques requiring little or no hardware.

4. Any infusion of equipment, including TV must be accompanied by some supervisory instruction, checking and evaluation. A very considerable expectation with respect to the staff of facilitators seems to be developing in this report but it would be hoped that they might render some service in this regard also as they take ideas and experiences from school to school.

We think it may well be true that the presence of television in the homes, when this condition is reached, may have far more impact in terms of vocabulary, expression and information than occassional classroom use. While some programs may be deplored, children everywhere are exposed to its great variety and everywhere can be seen the increment of language and knowledge. This will be especially true, one might conjecture, in the case of Northland's pupils whose opportunities for out-of-school language reinforcement are often so limited.

Finally, a word about maintenance. Undoubtedly, this is a problem. There were occasional complaints that requests for repair go unanswered, or that machines sent for repair are away for inordinate periods of time. Like many a Northland problem this stems, in part, from the facts of distance, of communication and of transportation. The Study Group has three suggestions:

1. Perhaps more replacement stock could be on hand at Peace River to be sent into a school with the repaired item coming back to Peace River for storage;

2. More acknowledgement, current advice, indication of prospects and probabilities, should be given by someone to the principals concerned so that they do not have the frustration, and genesis of complaint, of being in ignorance of what is happening;

3. If, as is recommended elsewhere, a more regular scheme of maintenance were in effect three improvements might be possible:

a) A mechanically minded visitor might be able to correct some minor ailment on the spot, or to remove an offending part for replacement without the necessity of sending out a whole machine;

b) The taking out and bringing in of equipment might be expedited in some cases;

c) There could be some external supervision of the care, condition, storage and manner of use of some of the equipment.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## Treaty Indians In Northland Schools

The schools of Northland serve, largely, Indian and Metis children, collectively referred to in this report as children of native ancestry. There is, of course, among the Metis, and even to some extent among the Indians, a varying degree of "white" ancestry. Many Metis served by Northland have become identified more with their Indian than their white cultures and origins.

Of the approximate 2400 pupils in Northland schools almost 900 have the status of Indian, commonly referred to as Treaty Indian, or status Indian. These persons come within the provisions of The Indian Act, of Canada, and have a special relationship to The Department of Northern Development and Indian Affairs, commonly referred to as Indian Affairs when Indian matters are under consideration.

There are in Northland a few Indians, so regarded by themselves by virtue of ancestry, who are not Treaty Indians. Their forebears signed no treaties. They have no reserves. Their legal status is the same as that of the Metis, whose is the same as that of any non-Indian resident of Alberta. Such Indians are to be found at Nose Creek and at Susa-Muskeg River.

The Treaty Indians have reserves upon which they may live and which are their own exclusive property. Not all choose to live on their reserves. They retain their treaty status even if they live elsewhere. Legal and jurisdictional problems are arising in this respect but these are beyond the concern of this report.

The provision of education for Treaty Indian children is the responsibility of Indian Affairs. This provision has been effected over the years in a number of ways, the history of which will not be detailed here. It will suffice to say that a few years ago it became policy and practice, supported largely by the Indians themselves, to have the education of Indian children provided, where possible, by the regular schools and school systems of the Province. More recently there has been some reversal of this view among some Indians.

Hence, it developed that Indian Affairs entered into agreement with Northland that the division would operate some schools for Indian children within its area, and admit Indian children to schools which it operated for non-Indians. Fort Vermilion School Division operates four schools essentially for Treaty Indians also.

At Fox Lake, Garden Creek and Jean D'Or the schools are comprised entirely, or practically so, of Treaty Indian children. Elsewhere, as for example at Atikameg, Fort McKay, Janvier and Calling Lake, there is a mixture of Indian and Metis children in the school.

The Study Group discussed the arrangements with Indian Affairs officers and on occasion discussed them locally, though in the latter cases not much response was evoked. Locally there seemed to be little interest in who actually operated the school.

The Group found little cause for concern over the arrangements in effect, which in simple terms are these:

a) that current operational expenses for the whole division in each year are determined, divided by the total number of pupils enrolled, the per pupil cost then being multiplied by the number of treaty children, the resulting sum being paid to the division by Indian Affairs.

b) that when buildings are required there is determined on the basis of prospective enrolment of Indian and non-Indian children the proportion of the cost to be borne by Indian Affairs, which in due course is paid by that

department. Band Council approval and signature are now obtained in respect of all capital projects serving Indians on reserves.

Buildings on reserves are paid for entirely by Indian Affairs although the division assumes the responsibility for planning, in consultation, and carrying forward the project. An initial payment is made by Indian Affairs, and there are progress payments from time to time, enabling the division to meet its obligations to the contractor.

As is not uncommon in such arrangements as the above there are problems of data collecting, accounting, processing, obtaining approvals and the like resulting in occasional delays in the receipt of funds. Vigorous pursuit of monies owing to the division should be instituted at all times to reduce any interest charges that may ensue from delayed payment.

With the erection of a new school recently at Jean D'Or, and one in process of construction at Fox Lake, the erection of buildings on reserves served by Northland appears to have been taken care of for the time being.

As suggested above there have been stirrings among Indian people for some sort of autonomy in respect of their schools, especially on reserves. Indian Affairs has some current sympathy for this position though developments, at least in Alberta, are few.

The Study Group has examined the statement Indian Control of Indian Education prepared in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood. The Brotherhood's Education Committee which participated in this project comprised membership from Indian organizations from most of the provinces and territories.

In addition to setting forth philosophical principles, and discussing various aspects of education and its delivery to Indian children, the document comes out strongly for direct participation and control by Indians in respect of the management of schools. The recommendations made in chapter five of this report concerning the participation of Treaty Indians in the local and regional committee structure is in harmony with this point of view.

At Jean D'Or the question of local control and autonomy was raised, by the Study Group, at the well attended public meeting. There was evoked no interest in the matter. It was clear that they had not been thinking along these lines.

In any event, this is really a question for discussion and negotiation between Indian Affairs and the Indians. Northland is only involved should there be developments in that direction which would mean the withdrawal of any school involved from Northland's operations.

It would be hoped that should the program of development of local school committees recommended in the chapter on governance be successful, and be operative in connection with schools on reserves it might make some contribution to the preparation for acceptance of such responsibility.

Apart from what might be termed certain mechanics of accounting and payment the Study Group found no areas of concern in respect of the division's acting as educational supplier for the Indians and for Indian Affairs, other than those applicable to its schools generally.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## Administrative Structure

In the chapter on Governance it is recommended that the government and administration of the division revert, in one respect, to the more typical arrangement to be found in Alberta school divisions, namely that the chairman of the board function in the traditional pattern and that he cease to be the chief executive officer of the board. In the chapter on Supervisory Staff it was recommended that the Superintendent of Schools be the chief executive officer. Consequent upon that a reorganized supervisory staff was described. In the chapters on School Buildings and Maintenance it was recommended that the chief officer in those regards report to the Secretary-Treasurer, or at least be brought into much closer liasion with him because of the financial implications and involvements of much of his work. He should not operate with the degree of autonomy which has seemed to characterize his office, at least during 1974.

A chart showing the positions and their relationships will be found at the end of this chapter. It includes what appear to be some logical extensions and other items which have been recommended such as the Community Liaison Officer.

The chief feature of the arrangement is that the Superintendent of Schools is the chief executive officer. Reporting to him are two major officers representing the two main functions or activities of the division's administration or involvement, a) the teaching and educational functions, and b) the business, property and facilitating functions. These branches would be presided over, respectively, by an associate superintendent and a secretary-treasurer, an officer which by law a division is required to have. Each of these would preside over further staff who would exercise various specialized roles.

The chart sets forth positions only, not functions, although the latter may well be inferred in many cases from the title. This is later followed by a list of duties or areas of responsibility of senior officers, although it does not attempt to be exhaustive.

As in every organization there must be some flexibility, depending upon circumstances, joint concerns, and individual capacities and interests. For example, the procurement of equipment and supplies for schools must be done by and through someone exercising the role of purchasing agent for reasons of accounting and control, but the actual equipment and supplies ordered must be determined from the instruction side, subject to any board policy.

Two assistant superintendents are shown, designated as personnel and instruction. The fact is that having regard to the widespread nature of the division they will have to share in the evaluative function and in the giving of advice and counsel to teachers. Administratively, however, in relation to the associate superintendent, each has a more specific function. In matters having to do with proposed transfers, evaluations of principals, personnel matters, the assistant superintendent, instruction, would report to his colleague who would pursue the matter, if necessary, with the associate superintendent. The reverse would occur regarding instructional matters requiring administrative action.

The Study Group is very conscious that what is proposed requires some addition to staff. It can only remind the reader of this report

a) that there are approximately 30 schools to be visited and serviced;

b) that they are far apart and often hard to reach;

c) that the current staff of teachers is unhappy because of the lack of service and

contact, both regarding instruction and physical plant;

d) that the level of educational achievement is low, when judged by such standards as retardation, drop-outs, and paucity of graduates.

It is a question as to whether the status quo is acceptable or something better shall be striven for.

The duties and responsibilities suggested for the chief officers shown on the following chart are indicated below. Before detailing them however, reference is made to what may be termed the Senior Management Group.

In an organization having the size and complexity of Northland School Division it is essential that there be close liaison between the educational and the business and physical aspects of its operations. This should be achieved in considerable measure through informal discussions and through simple processes of keeping others informed, such as circulating files and copies of documents having a relevance for others.

Nevertheless there would seem to be a place for a structure having a bit more formality. This is to be found in the Senior Management Group comprising the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent, and the Secretary-Treasurer. Meetings of this group should be on a regular basis, perhaps once a month, and on call when developments require. The Superintendent will be its chairman.

The Group, as such, has no administrative authority but provides opportunity for careful study of questions from more than one point of view. It provides also for awareness and information being disseminated among those who have need to be informed.

The Senior Management Group will concern itself with the following items, though not to the exclusion of others that may at any time require joint consideration:

1. Planning and budgeting;

2. Developing and recommending policies to the board;

3. Developing and planning procedures or steps for the implementation of board policy;

4. Developing advice to be given to the board regarding policy and administrative matters;

5. Considering intra-organizational matters and administrative effectiveness;

6. Considering relationships between the division and other organizations and bodies;

7. Liaison with local communities.

The chief functions of the major officers are as follows.

Superintendent of Schools

1. Chief adviser to the divisional board; in respect of major matters after consultation with the Senior Management Group;

2. Chairman, Senior Management Group;

3. Administrative oversight of all the operations of the division; function coordinator;

4. Implementation of board policies and decisions; in respect of major matters after consultation with the Senior Management Group;

5. Spokesman for the division, subject to the direction of the board, and except when the chairman is the appropriate spokesman;

6. Public relations.

Associate Superintendent

1. Member of the Senior Management Group;

2. Providing leadership in educational matters and reporting on these matters to the Superintendent;

3. Supervising, evaluating and improving the performance of immediate subordinates;

4. Concern for all aspects of the educational program.

Secretary Treasurer

1. Member of the Senior Management Group;

2. Exercising fiscal control and reporting thereon to the Superintendent;

3. Providing leadership in business matters and reporting on them to the Superintendent;

4. Supervising, evaluating and improving the performance of immediate subordinates including those responsible for buildings and maintenance.

Assistant Superintendent, Personnel

General administration of all professional personnel and paraprofessional personnel, other than counsellor aides, in schools, including:

1. Recruitment;

2. Placement;

3. Evaluation;

4. Promotion;

5. Separation.

Extensive school visitation is envisaged in the discharge of these responsibilities.

Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

1. Orientation activities for new teachers;

2. Professional development programs for all teachers;

3. Curriculum development and modification;

4. Special instructional programs, such as TESL, Distar, etc;

5. Instructional equipment and supplies;

6. Supervising specialist, non-school personnel associated with the general instructional program.

Extensive school visitation is envisaged in the discharge of these responsibilities.

Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services

1. Supervising the Home Placement Program and other services offered to high school students attending schools of other jurisdictions;

2. Administering the counsellor-aide program;

3. Special education programs;

4. Standardized testing for guidance purposes;

5. Guidance to students and their teachers;

6. Attendance of students.

Director, Early Childhood Services

1. Local development and adaptation of ECS curriculum;

2. Organizing ECS in communities not yet served;

3. Selecting and training local instructors;

4. Liaison with local communities;

5. Liaison with provincial and other ECS officials.

Supervisor of Buildings and Maintenance

1. Supervising maintenance personnel;

2. Planning and implementing maintenance programs;

3. New building programs;

4. The student transportation system;

5. Supervising the school custodial staff;

6. Teacher housing.

Assistant Secretary Treasurer

1. Central office support staff;

2. Devising and supervising standard office procedures for the conduct of routine business matters;

3. Supervising the accounting work of the central office;

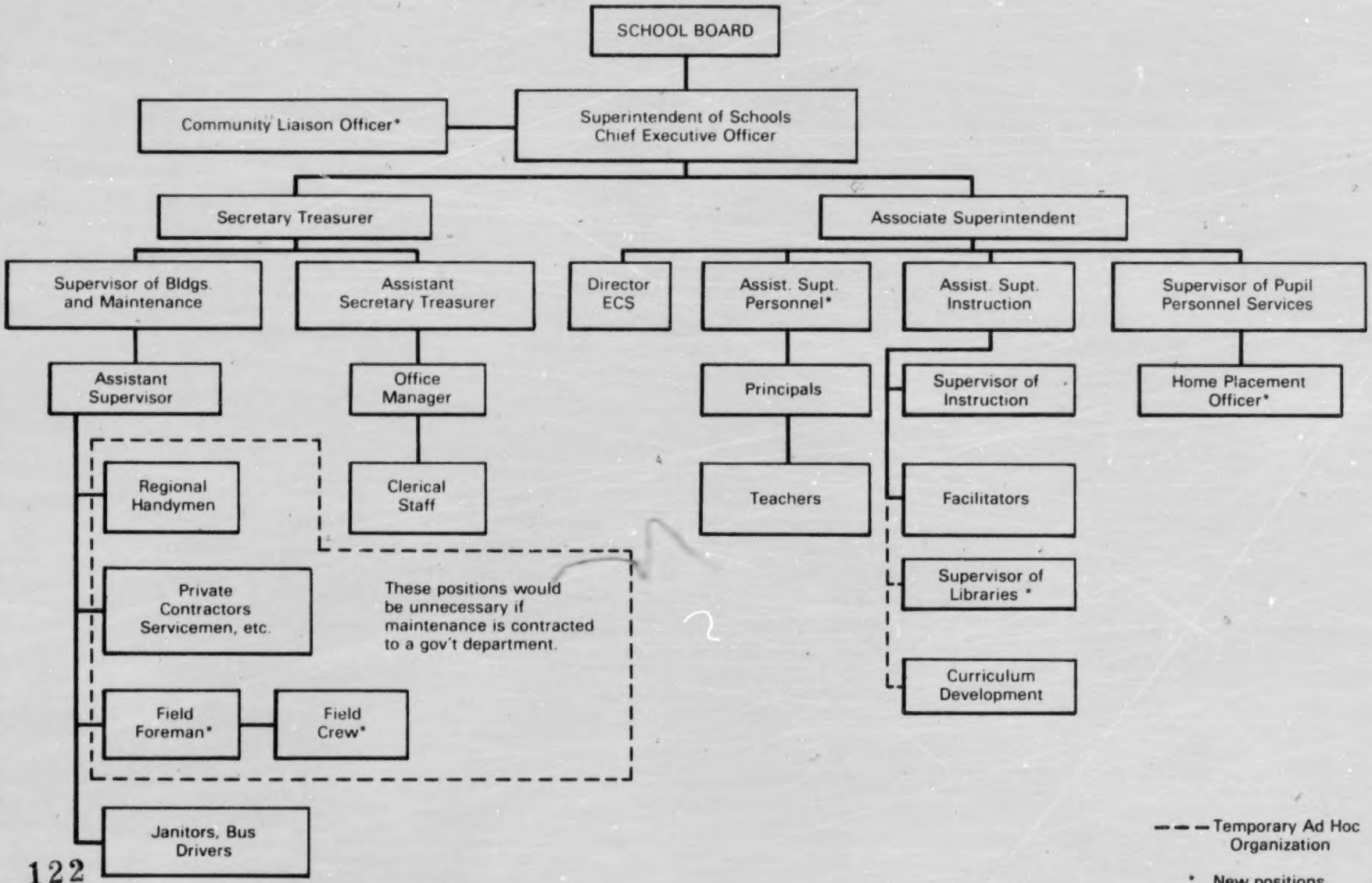
4. Inventory controls in the system;

5. Purchasing agent for the system.

Reference has been made elsewhere to the roles of other members of the staff, supervisor of instruction, home placement officer, community liaison officer, facilitators, and library supervisor.

The Study Group would be prepared to concede that there is not necessarily an only way of organizing a total staff. It is of the view, however, that what has been proposed above has more merit than other possible arrangements which it considered.

## SUGGESTED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
## NORTHLAND SCHOOL DIVISION



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## Business and Financial

The purposes of the Northland School Division are discussed in chapter 4. Its primary function is to provide schooling, education of good quality to the children of the communities served. Secondarily it may be conceived as having a purpose to enhance the quality of life and to contribute to the development of higher levels of community functioning and participation in public affairs.

The achievement of these objectives must ultimately be expressed in monetary terms. People must be employed. Services must be purchased. Buildings and equipment must be supplied. Maintenance must be provided. Travel must be engaged in. All depend upon the availability of funds.

It is at this point that the division, through its board and officers, has its most direct and significant relationship with the Department of Education and the Government of Alberta. Proposals for the improvement or extension of services and programs must ultimately, in most instances, be translated into terms of financial support necessary to implement them. The Department, which has a stewardship function in relation to public moneys, must be satisfied that the sums requested, and those ultimately provided, are effectively used.

Earlier in this report mention was made of the rather different nature of budgeting applicable to Northland as compared with school boards and school committees of counties generally. They balance their budgets by imposing a tax on their ratepayers through the supplementary requisition. Northland balances its budget by convincing the Minister of Education, through his department, of the necessity of supporting the division to a requested level of special grant. This grant is over and above the revenues which the division receives in the normal way from the School Foundation Program Fund, under the School Grants Regulations and from special project funds such as Early Childhood Services and the Educational Opportunities Fund.

The division has the necessity, each year, of presenting its case with the hope of persuading those who need to be persuaded, that it needs the money. The Department of Education, and the Minister, have the responsibility of satisfying themselves that the sum of money is reasonable and necessary. On both sides questions of judgment arise, it being natural for the division to seek improvement, expansion of programs and services, better service as it sees it, all translated into monetary terms, while at the same time the providers, or recommenders, of the money wish to be assured of necessity, of efficiency, and reasonableness.

The last statement above epitomizes the financial dilemma. How much is necessary? How much is reasonable? What levels of aspiration can be accepted?

The Study Group has made some examination of recent financial documents, budgets and annual statements. The increases per year are very large. For example:

| | Budgeted Expenditures | Actual Expenditures | Special Grant |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1973 | 3,445,221 | 3,511,413 | 953,090 |
| 1974 | 3,839,437 | 4,398,513 | 1,220,688 |
| 1975 | 6,444,177 | | 2,341,836 (requested) |

Regarding 1975 it should be stated that the budget had not been accepted at the time of writing this report and so may not be strictly comparable. This depends upon the levels of expenditure and corresponding special grant finally approved. In fact some possible reductions of considerable magnitude had seemingly been

identified. The considerable discrepancy between budgeted and actual expenditures in 1974 was taken care of in part by an excess of some $300,000 of revenue from the federal government over the budgeted revenue.

There are always differences from year to year, usually additions, which affect expenditures and tend to distort in lesser or greater degree the relative pictures. For example, there was commenced in 1974 the Early Childhood Services (kindergarten) program. It did not exist in 1973. It will be larger in 1975 as more communities are served. It involves an increasing budgetary item. In 1974 schools were operated for the first time at Zama City and Brewster's Camp involving both capital and current expense. They continue at a higher level in 1975.

In considering the cost level the Study Group again cautions about making comparisons with other school authorities, e.g. on a per pupil cost basis. The reader is referred again to the chapter on the uniqueness of Northland. It becomes a matter of attempting to assess three factors:

a) what support is reasonable and necessary because of the geographical dispersion of the division?

b) what support is reasonable because of the low economic and social status of the division?

c) is the division being efficiently operated?

To some extent a) and b) are parts of a combined or interdependent factor.

There is not the slightest doubt that it costs substantially more to provide any aspect of service in Northland, whether it be teaching staff, maintenance, housing for teachers, building or travel, than elsewhere.

The division, in connection with its 1975 budget, isolated the following items which it alleges contribute to its expense of operation beyond the normal, and attempts to attach a dollar figure to them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Isolation bonuses<br>Net deficit of payments over departmental grants for the purpose (see discussion in chapter 9) | $ 94,530 |
| 2. | Teacher-Aides and Counsellor-Aides<br>No grants are receivable in respect of these (see Chapter 9) | 290,900 |
| 3. | Housing for teachers<br>Deficit on current account, (1974 actual) | 34,423 |
| | Capital costs, not eligible for S.F.P.F. support, (see chapter 12) | 109,583 |
| 4. | Travel and subsistence of administrative staff, including trustees. This $130,000 is estimated to be caused by geographic considerations (see chapter 3) | 130,000 |
| 5. | Boarding allowances and tuition fees<br>net after government grants | 62,000 |
| 6. | Busing<br>net after government grants | 396,560 |
| 7. | Early Childhood Services<br>net after government grants | 139,803 |
| 8. | Orientation and In-Service for teachers, aides, and E.C.S. | 26,000 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9. | Instructional supplies including free texts, excess over normal | 35,000 |
| 10. | Ineligible debenture charges | 154,454 |
| 11. | Rent, - divisional office, Grouard teacherages, Grouard schools | 43,473 |
| | Total | 1,516,681 |

There are many items that have not been encompassed within the above listings such as:

a) The necessity of having relatively lower pupil-teacher ratios because of the special teaching problems, and pupil disabilities;

b) Low enrolments in such one-room schools as Nose Creek, Steen River and Brewster's Camp. It seems unthinkable to close the schools but the S.F.P. and grant revenues are very low in comparison with costs;

c) Heavy maintenance expense arising from distances and isolation; in addition to travel;

d) Large long distance call bills because of distances involved in reaching schools and the divisional office;

e) Heavy administrative effort due to the large number of unusual arrangements and circumstances which have to be given attention;

f) Higher costs of all sorts of goods and services laid down or rendered in isolated communities.

The eleven items listed above which totalled $1,516,681 are now commented upon.

1. Isolation bonuses were discussed in chapter 9. It may be repeated that they range from a low $400 to a high of $1900. The scale has not been revised for some years. A revision should be undertaken. The deficit arises from the fact that the contribution under the School Grants Regulations has a maximum of $860. The rest, up to the current Northland maximum of $1900, must be met as a component of the special grant. Actually the $860 figure is new for 1975, the maximum formerly being $750. Northland may expect some increase in its revenue from this source, perhaps in the order of 15%.

If it is intended that the isolation bonus grant should cover most of the actual payment required to make the bonus meaningful it is too low. It should be further looked at by the Department of Education with a view to being more realistic.

2. Teacher-Aides and Counsellor-Aides

These seem to be essential in the schools because of language and other circumstances. Their employment has been accepted for a number of years but no grant support is received from regular channels. They are a full charge against special grants.

3. Housing for teachers

This is fully discussed in chapter 12. The Study Group sees no way of avoiding this service, and of making it one of the marginal benefits for teachers. When staff is expanded, as in 1975, more residences have be to be provided. These have to be paid for either out of current revenue or by way of short term loans to be paid for over a period of years.

4. Travel and Subsistence

The far flung and isolated locations of schools in relation to headquarters result in heavy expense for travel and associated subsistence. Recall the comparison of aggregate distances from headquarters referred to in chapter 3, 250 miles compared with 7000 miles,

with charter air service being required in a number of instances.

Mention may be made also of such factors as principals' meetings. In many, if not most, school jurisdictions it is common to have a monthly meeting of principals with the superintendent and his staff. These meetings serve administrative, educational and planning purposes. In most cases they are relatively inexpensive, only a few miles of travel being involved. Such meetings are equally, if not more, necessary in Northland, but because of distance and transportation problems are expensive. The principals have been urging more meetings and four per year are now planned. Two, at least, of these can be combined with more general gatherings, orientation in August, teachers convention, E.O.F. subsidzied institute, but some additional travel or subsistence may be required.

5. Boarding and Tuition

Since many of Northland's grade IX pupils and practically all its high school pupils must be subsidized, most under unusual circumstances, the expense of encouraging, or making possible, their attendance must be met.

6. Busing

This is discussed in the chapter on Pupils and Services. The deficit in this category is very large. This would appear to be due to the fact that much of the transportation provided is not required by law to be supplied. The services now in effect have been accepted as reasonable under the circumstances for some years.

Subsection (3) of section 4 of the Schedule (Part B) of the School Foundation Program Fund Regulations reads,

"(3) The Minister may adjust the amount payable to any board under this section where in his opinion the circumstances are such that it is fair and reasonable to make that adjustment."

Such an adjustment should be sought by the board so that the support from regular sources would be somewhat more in line with 1975 costs. This would reduce correspondingly the special grant. No such request has been made according to departmental officers.

The Study Group has gained the impression that the division has not always been as diligent in seeking to alleviate its circumstances, even though in small ways, as it might have. The special grant procedures referred to in the section headed Special Grant may be a factor in this respect.

7. Early Childhood Services

This kindergarten type service has only recently been developed. It is deemed to be essential to assist children whose mother language is other than English, many of whom may suffer other disabilities, to get a better start in grade one. The operation as being developed by Northland would seem to be exactly what was envisaged when the provincially funded program was set up.

8. Orientation and In-Service

The special nature of Northland's schools, of pupil population and of communities served, makes it imperative that new teachers receive some instruction and advice before going to their schools. This the division must pay for. Similarly the paraprofessionals employed are without any training. To enhance their usefulness they must receive instruction, both immediately upon appointment and also subsequently. Travel, subsistence and instruction must be paid for.

9. Instructional supplies and texts.

Because of the low economic status of most of the communities served, and to assure

that pupils have what they need to be taught, school supplies and texts are made available to a greater extent than in most jurisdictions.

10. Ineligible debenture charges.

The School Foundation Program Fund services the debentures attributable to a building project to an approved size and up to a maximum cost per square foot.

Northland has found it necessary at times to exceed the space limits, but more particularly has exceeded, substantially, the square foot cost. There is no avoiding this having regard to the much higher costs of construction or building placement in isolated locales. These overages become a charge on the current budget, and hence are a component in the special grant.

11. Rent

Three cases are referred to here, which from the overall governmental picture have offsetting features, but which adversely affect Northland's budget:

a) Rent is being paid for office quarters in a privately owned building in Peace River, pursuant to the move it was required to make from Edmonton. In Edmonton the division still owns an office plant but has been required to make it available without charge to the Athabasca University.

b) Teachers' residences were owned by the division at Grouard. These were surrended to Alberta Housing Corporation and the division pays rent for those it uses;

c) The division's school plant at Grouard was turned over to the former Department of Public Works for use as an Alberta Vocational Centre. The division's school operates in part of the plant for which it now pays rent

There may be some compensating factors in b) and c) but the arrangements are such that the division appears to have lost the ownership of certain assets and any benefit, budget-wise, that might accrue from such ownership. Relative to the above matters it has been drawn to the Study Group's attention that Northland is still responsible for meeting debenture payments on the Grouard plant and the Edmonton office. These have been effectively separated from the division by governmental action. The division pays rent at Grouard for accommodation with respect to which it is also paying debenture charges - something of an anomaly. Similarly it pays office rent at Peace River and debenture servicing for office space in Edmonton from which it derives no revenue.

These items affect the special grant adversely. Some serious attempt should be made by the Department of Education to remove these charges from the division and place them where they now more logically belong.

The recitation of the eleven items above, and the addition of such other factors as were referred to as a) to f), serve to indicate that Northland is faced with extraordinary expenditures. The figures given by the secretary-treasurer are easily verified in some instances, not so easily in others. They are clearly justifiable in some cases, difficult to be conclusive about in others. Nevertheless it has to be conceded that a high level of budgeting and of expenditure is necessary.

The Study Group made arrangements for a team of Department of Education field officers to make some examination of the business and financial affairs of the division. Unfortunately illness and other emergencies delayed and to some extent limited the scope of the study. Nevertheless a considerable number of matters were looked into and were reported upon. The Study Group has had little time or opportunity to probe further into these, a number of which are now referred to. The full report of the team will

be made available to the division. It is, of course, available to the Department of Education.

1. The team, which sat in on the 1975 budget meeting of the board, noted that this large and complicated document was before the board prior to its approval for not much more than half an hour. The impression was gathered that the board members as a whole did not really comprehend its significance as a planning document for a year's operation or were content to accept the proposals of the administration with little criticism or analysis.

The budget meeting of a board is surely one of its most important. More study time would seem to be warranted if it is truly to be the board's document. It was reported that no changes were effected in the budget by the board at its meeting.

It may be assumed that there were informal discussions involving the chairman and occasionally other trustees but the actual formal study and approval appear to have been somewhat perfunctory.

2. The equipment and furniture budgets for the individual schools totalled $58,000 plus $32,000 for special, early childhood and outdoor education, and $100,000 for video-tape recorders. The $58,000 is comprised largely of costed lists supplied by principals covering a great variety of items, projectors, recorders, calculators, playground equipment, listening stations, miscellaneous furniture and other items. The total may not be excessive but these observations are made:

a) ordering seems to be at the whim of the principal, i.e. without any sort of planning as to what complement of machines should be in each school. This leads to something being of use, or expected use, by some teacher but of little interest to another as staffs change. The Study Group must say again, as it did in chapter 14, that it saw very little use being made of the already considerable quantity of teaching hardware in the schools.

b) Some kind of standard issue of equipment, especially teaching equipment, should be established;

c) Augmentations of this should be made only when there is clear evidence that some staff or teacher will, in fact, make use of the addition;

d) Equipment not in use, or not likely to be used by the current staff, should be brought back to headquarters where it might be made available, on request, to schools having an immediate need or interest.

In the matter of video-tape recorders, this equipment ought to be supplied only when some supervisory officer is satisfied that there is a teacher who is quite enthusiastic about its use.

Supervisory visits to the schools should on the one hand encourage and help with the use of instructional equipment and on the other take steps to see that it is in use, or available on request, and not be gathering dust.

3. A number of criticisms were made of the manner in which the maintenance function had been performed, lack of tendering, lack of expenditure control, direct engagement of charter flights by non-employees to be paid for by the division, undue freedom for the supervisor to commit the division. In fairness it must be observed that these criticisms relate to a period during which a supervisor was in charge who is no longer with the division but it would appear that some firmer scrutiny of the operations should have been in effect during that time.

The chief executive officer and the secretary-treasurer must be in closer contact

with the details of this very large operation. The use of purchase orders is essential, under suitable controls.

4. The board is not supplied with periodic print-outs showing expenditures to date in relation to budget. When as inevitably happens some part of the budget is over-expended, or is approaching that state, the board should know and take appropriate action under the circumstances. All over-expenditure should be authorized by board minute.

5. The discrepancy between E.C.S. expenditures and grant revenues is very high. Inevitably costs in Northland are higher than elsewhere. Perhaps there is full justification but the board should look closely into this operation, be fully satisfied, and be prepared to justify the heavy cost beyond grant support.

6. Departmental officers have had some difficulty in understanding or reconciling a number of items in the 1974 financial statement. Study is continuing regarding these. Explanations may be obtained, or advice may be given in respect of them. They include certain inter-relationships between operational and capital accounts. Great care must be excercised to assure the proper use of funds for their respective purposes.

7. Section 101 of The School Act, subsection (2), requires prior ministerial approval of short term capital loans. This has not been consistently obtained. Care must be taken to observe this requirement, not only because it is a statutory provision but also because the Department of Education is the residual payer when obligations are incurred.

8. While nominally the secretary-treasurer is the purchasing agent of the board it was found that several persons have exercised this function, i.e. have done ordering and purchasing. There will inevitably be cases where an officer, especially while on maintenance work, must engage in on-the-spot authorization. In general, however, in order that there may be accounting and budgetary control all should pass through and be processed by whomever is designated to be purchasing agent.

Recent discussions in the divisional office reveal an awareness of some previous laxity and an intention to improve channels and procedures. The proposal to have the supervisor of maintenance report to the secretary-treasurer should provide some rectification.

The examining team recommended specifically that there be a designated purchasing agent with duties and responsibilities properly described and with a statement of policies and procedures by which to be guided. This is consistent with the recommendation made in Chapter 16.

A number of detailed suggestions were also made some of the chief being:

a) that inventory records be developed and maintained;

b) that standard supply and equipment lists be prepared;

c) that lists of eligible and qualified bidders and suppliers be maintained;

d) that specifications be established for a variety of products and services;

e) that the assistant secretary-treasurer be given increased responsibilities and authority thereby relieving the secretary-treasurer of some of the burden of his office;

f) that there be some additions to clerical staff. It was noted that the extension of supervisory personnel has not been accompanied

by a corresponding typing and clerical capacity. Should there be some monitoring of materials being produced for distribution to avoid excessive proliferation?

Special Grants

As has been indicated several times in this report Northland looks to the Department of Education for its ultimate financing rather than to a levy on its ratepayers. There are a number of other jurisdictions who also must seek special grants because of their impecunious circumstances.

Over the years the Department has developed a variety of equalization schemes designed to enable such school authorities to tap regular sources of revenue and eliminate or reduce the amount of grant to be received pursuant to ministerial discretion, currently under section 17 of the School Grants Regulations.

The latest of these is the Requisition Equalization Grant (Part K of the School Grants Regulations, 1975). Because of Northland's peculiar circumstances it profits from this in very small amount in relation to many other school authorities.

No such scheme has ever been fully effective and equitable, nor is it likely that one will ever be devised that will take care of the extraordinary circumstances prevailing in Northland. Special grants appear to be part of its way of life for the foreseeable future.

The present sequence of events is that Northland prepares a budget which is approved by the board. It is forwarded to the Department of Education for scrutiny. The budgeted revenues are checked and the expenditures are examined critically, especially in relation to increases over the previous year. Correspondence and conversations ensue between Department and division pursuant to which modifications and corrections are effected. In due course the board and its officers meet with the Department to defend the budget. Further adjusting may result. Eventually the Department accepts a budget. In effect what this means is that the division can expect to receive the necessary special grant support, over and above its other revenues, including entitlements under the School Foundation Program and Schools Grants Regulations.

Unfortunately this process is not completed until several months of the year have already gone past. Commitments have been made and expenditures incurred. Whether this process can be speeded up is a question. The audited financial statement for 1974, a crucial document in the process, is dated April 7, 1975. Some of the comments made in the section on audit may have relevance here. It would be highly desirable to develop a new routine. For one thing the officers of the Department are inundated with the budgetary problems of many boards all at the same time making it extremely difficult to do justice to their study, or to deal with them with despatch.

While some aspects of the budget cannot be completed until after the financial statement of the previous year is complete, nevertheless it should be possible for the division to prepare and send forward a tentative budget, or a listing of probable increases in expenditure, with documentation, in December or January. This would enable study and dialogue to begin much earlier resulting in better understanding and less hurried decisions. The Department should require this.

If, as is recommended, periodic printouts of revenues and expenditures in relation to budget were provided the operation of budgeting at an early date should be easier.

It has become practice, almost tradition, for the expenditures to exceed the budget, a circumstance by no means unusual in an in-

flationary period. Compensating revenues often lag considerably behind expenditures incurred. In any event, the Department having satisfied itself that the expenditures have been made, and that all the revenues still outstanding and applicable to the year in question have been taken into consideration, approves and provides such final total special grant as is necessary to put the financial statement in balance. In fact, the statement includes such an amount, which may be subject to adjustment, in its revenues even though not actually received nor authorized at the time.

The result is that the financial statement does not at any time show a deficit. It always is in exact balance.

The Study Group has some misgivings about this practice. It is quite aware that in the end the deficit will have to be picked up, but currently being a kind of automatic after-the-event occurrence it must tend to make board and officers less hew-to-the-budget conscious.

It is conceded that it is impossible to predict with high accuracy what the ultimate need will be. A Zama City or a Brewster's Camp may appear without notice as in 1974.

Nevertheless the Study Group considers that it would be salutary, and better practice, for a dollar figure of special grant to be approved, rather than for interim payments on an unknown final figure to be made, and the sum paid during the year.

It should then be incumbent on the division to spend, as closely as possible, in accordance with its budget, keeping periodically informed as to the state of its revenue and expenditures. If circumstances develop through the year which are of an extraordinary nature it should present these to the Minister, through the Department, and seek additional support at the time.

At year's end the accounts reflect only revenues in actual prospect, including any portion of special grant authorized but not received. The financial statement might, and properly so, show a deficit.

It would still be necessary for the government to cover the deficit since there is no other source of revenue, but the statement would reflect a true state of affairs as they in fact existed at December 31.

It may be emphasized that a primary purpose in making this recommendation is to attempt to make the division more expenditure vis-a-vis budget conscious.

Interest

Schedule 13 of the 1974 financial statement shows the sums paid out during that year for interest charges as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| On debentures | $185,544 |
| On debentures (other school boards) | 6,222 |
| On capital loans | 23,056 |
| On operational loans (including bank charges | 83,527 |
| | $298,349 |

Offset against this is $10,542 received from other boards. The sums involving other boards relate to assets transferred to or from other jurisdictions.

The total amount spent on interest is thus about $290,000, a not inconsiderable budget item.

With respect to borrowing for current purposes the division is in good company in that few school authorities finish a year with money available to meet expenses before the

receipt of funds in the new year. It is a continual process of borrowing and reborrowing. From the standpoint of efficient use of money it seems wasteful.

Since the final payer in this case is the provincial government interest becomes a component of the special grant. No ready solution is apparent unless through some expediting of payments, or interim payments, combined with some degree of control to assure that the money would not be spent and the old situation slipped into, the division were provided with working capital early in the year.

On capital account over $180,000 a year goes out for interest, again at the ultimate expense of the provincial government. As mentioned in another chapter the Study Group found that in Manitoba and Saskatchewan buildings are provided by the government through the appropriate department, after all necessary scrutinies and approvals are completed. In other words they are erected as though public works projects. Upon completion they are transferred to the school authorities. This means that no debenture charges are involved. The buildings are an immediate charge on provincial revenues. The Study Group regards this procedure favorably. It greatly diminishes the administrative and financial effort of the division and does away with interest charges.

The question is as to which is preferable from the province's point of view.

a) to pay cash for Northland's buildings thereby avoiding interest charges;

b) to authorize debentures, which it must service at a high rate of interest, retaining its funds which can be invested pending their having to be applied on debenture servicing. The latter would likely be at a lower rate of interest.

It should be kept in mind that the whole operation of authorizing, processing, funding and servicing involves a not inconsiderable administrative effort for various persons and agencies.

On balance the Study Group believes it would be advantageous to pay for buildings immediately while the province is able to do so.

Requisitions

As has been stated earlier in this report the equalized assessment total upon which Northland may requisition is very small indeed. It amounts to $2,240,110. When related to pupil enrolment, excluding Treaty Indian enrolment, this provides only $1,490 behind each pupil, an inconsequential amount. Twenty mills on this provides only $30 a pupil out of a total annual cost per pupil in the vicinty of $1,750 (1974).

Pursuing this matter for purposes of comparison the following figures were obtained for the year 1973.

A. All Alberta School Jurisdictions

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Total revenue from supplementary requisitions (p. 128, 69th Annual Report) | $ 56,298,946 |
| 2. Total number of students in Alberta, Sept. 30/73 (p. 112, 69th Annual Report) | 419,755 |
| Revenue per student from supplementary requisitions | $134 |

B. Northland School Division

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Total revenue from supplementary requisitions in 1973 | $48,103 |

(1973 Audited Financial Statement)

2. Enrolments in Northland, Sept. 30/73

| | |
|---|---|
| Total no. of students | 2376 |
| No. of Treaty students | 895 |
| No. of non-Treaty students | 1481 |

3. Revenue per student from supplementary requisitions - $20

Revenue per non-treaty student - $32

If Northland had in that year had the difference per pupil between $134 and $32 it would have had an additional sum of approximately $150,000. The board is, of course, helpless in this matter which reflects unfavorably upon it to the extent that this lost, or non-existent, revenue must appear as a component of the special grant.

There are some further related considerations.

1. The supplementary requisition may be levied only on assessments which lie in organized school districts. This is so stated in section 6 of The Northland School Division Act. It is conjectured that the rationale of this was that it would be unfair to have supplementary levies upon lands not served by schools, the assumption being that where there is a district there is a school, or at least the possibility of a school.

In section 8 it is stated that "the board, to the extent that it considers it feasible to do so, shall make arrangements for the education of children whose parents reside within the Division but not within school districts".

The term "make arrangements" seems to imply transporting or boarding. Operating a school is not mentioned. It is a form of making arrangements, it is true, but if that had really been envisaged it seems probable that the wording would have been "shall operate a school or make other arrangements".

The fact is that there are now many districts without schools, and some schools without districts, which seems to violate, both ways, the principle that there should be supplementary requisitions only on communities served by schools. The probability is in respect of districts no longer served by schools, or transportation services, that little assessment is involved.

The schools without districts are currently Brewster's Camp, Nose Creek and Zama City. It has been recommended that Brewster's Camp and Zama City be transferred to Fort Vermilion. This can only be done if districts are formed, in which case they would bear supplementary requisition levies imposed by that division.

The Nose Creek community has little or no assessment having regard to its location.

The Study Group sees no justification for these districts, except Nose Creek, being exempt and recommends that districts be established whether transfers are effected or not. The additional revenue will not be great but there will be consistency. The division should take the initiative in a matter of this sort.

2. Actually the levy for supplementary purposes imposed on Northland's equalized assessment is complicated by the electric power and pipeline taxation arrangements. The division makes its demand based on the

equalized assessment, at levels approximating 22 mills. The meeting of this is in part taken care of by its being allocated a share of the E.P. and P.L. tax applicable to the local improvement districts affected. The sum actually received is the amount of the requisition.

The Study Group interviewed officers of the Department of Municipal Affairs. The whole matter of taxation and allocation of funds derived therefrom is a matter of some complexity. It was agreed that the school district boundary is a rather arbitrary line placing one property inside the taxing zone and leaving an adjacent one out. The question arose as to whether all lands in an improvement district should be subject to some form of supplementary requisition. No neat solution to this question was arrived at. It is something that officers of the two departments might further explore with two ends in mind, the achieving of greater equity and the increasing of funds available to support schools.

The Study Group was supplied with some figures which purported to show that from the total area encompassed by Northland very substantial revenues accrue to the province. While the area is a financial burden the revenues from its area appear to be very much in excess of such burden.

Audit

The Northland School Division Act provides, section 7, that the books and accounts of the division shall be audited by the Provincial Auditor, or his representative. This is a long standing arrangement applicable to a variety of institutions and agencies which are very largely supported by government funds. It applies, for example, in respect of some of the province's major hospitals even though they are deemed to be autonomous, operating under their own boards.

The question has been raised as to whether this is a necessary requirement and whether the Provincial Auditor does, in fact, render some service or effect some controls beyond those that would prevail if, as in the usual case, a firm of chartered accountants were engaged. Pursuant to discussion of the matter with officers of Audit and others, including the division and Department of Education officers, it would appear that such is not the case. The representatives of Audit perform essentially the same functions as a private auditor.

Another consideration is that of cost, the Provincial Auditor's bill being, for 1974, some $8,500. Admittedly this is not a highly significant sum in relation to the budget. Assurance was given that this figure is a modestly accurate reflection of the actual cost in relation to employees' time and transportation and living expenses while auditors are in Peace River. The fee of a local auditor would be less, judging by charges to other divisions.

However, there was revealed that the divisional office relies on the auditors actually to produce the financial statement, including the preparatory work necessary. In effect, to the extent that this is true, the financial statement is not the division's statement but is Audit's statement about the division's affairs. The representatives of Audit with whom discussions were held indicated that it ought not properly to be done this way. The division should prepare the statement which, together with the background scrutinies appropriate, should then be audited, and if necessary, amended. They were of the view that if the sort of service rendered in this regard were provided by an independent auditor the charge would have to be commensurate. Whether, if the division were to assume the basic function of financial statement preparation, this now being a substantial and complex document, additional office help would be needed is a question.

From the standpoint of full understanding of the division's financial affairs the exercise should be a salutary one for the secretary-treasurer and his staff. The Study Group considers that the division should not rely on the auditor to perform this function.

One argument in favor of a private auditor is that those who engage in this business usually do several school board audits and do have an intimate knowledge of school board affairs which should be of some advantage.

The Department of Education has its own staff of field officers who visit school board offices intermittently. Their functions include both checking on accounting procedures and practices and giving assistance and advice. As is so frequently the case the demands on their time limit the amount of attention to be given. Some more frequent visiting of Northland would be desirable because its total affairs are for a number of reasons more complicated than in most divisions.

The Study Group sees no compelling reason to continue audit by the Provincial Auditor. Without making any criticism of the service rendered it suggests that the time has arrived to revert to the normal practice of having the audit performed by a private auditor.

Office

In the matter of office accommodation it will be recalled that the division had, and still nominally owns, an office building in Edmonton, now occupied by Athabasca University. The division leases accommodation at Peace River. This is not fully satisfactory.

Earlier in this report, chapter two, reference was made to the matter of headquarters, it being accepted, despite some pros and cons, that the office should remain in Peace River. That being the case the Study Group recommends that the division be provided with its own quarters, including storage and shop, at Peace River. The financial arrangements are not of too great consequence since in the end the facility will be paid for by the provincial government. Whether actually handled in terms of dollars, or only on a theoretical basis, there should be or be deemed to be a quid pro quo in relation to the Edmonton property.

Level of Support

In concluding this chapter the Study Group wishes to say in respect of financing the division, that it sees no alternative to a much higher than normal level of expenditure if progress is to be made in improving the quality and effectiveness of education throughout the division. This has been implied in the many recommendations that have been made for extension or improvement of services, facilities and personnel. It is not feasible to express this in dollar terms because needs and conditions change with much frequency. There must be continual dialogue between Department of Education and divisional board. There must be efficiency of operation taking due account of the factors inherent in the nature of the division. The official attitude needs to be one of willingness to do whatever will make a contribution to improved effectiveness.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## Other Northern School Jurisdictions

No extensive study of Northland School Division could be complete without some consideration of the manner in which educational services are organized and administered in other provinces and territories of Western Canada where similar circumstances prevail. When Northland visits were completed the Study Group contacted the appropriate school authorities in the Northwest Territories and northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Arrangements were made for two trips.

The first of these trips was to Yellowknife to hold discussions with Mr. N. McPherson, Director of Education of the Government of the Northwest Territories, and other officials of his department, and, more particularly to visit Chief Jimmy Broneau School at Edzo, N.W.T. The second trip took the Study Group to Winnipeg, Manitoba, first for two days of discussions with Mr. K. Jasper, Official Trustee of the Frontier School Division and some of his officials. The second leg of this trip was a one-day visit to Frontier Collegiate at Cranberry Portage in northern Manitoba. The final stage was a one-day visit to La Ronge, Saskatchewan, for discussions with Mr. Glen Lindgren, Director of the Academic Education Branch of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan and other officials of his Branch.

No pretence is made that the Study Group was able to obtain a complete and comprehensive description of these school systems, let alone make any kind of assessment of their effectiveness. Nonetheless, the discussions which were held were long, frank, and very relevant to the interests and concerns of the Study Group. They added much to the understandings Group members have of the problems of northern education and suggested alternatives to many of Northland's present practices.

## The Northwest Territories and Rae-Edzo School

There being no direct comparability between Northland School Division and the Territorial Department of Education in Yellowknife, the call upon the Director of Education there was primarily a courtesy call. It was learned in general discussion that the Territorial school system has approximately 600 teachers, making it about 4 times as large as the Northland school system. Since there are few school boards in the Territories the Territorial Department of Education operates most schools directly. It has a considerable staff for this purpose, some regional superintendents being stationed at various points in the territories.

One feature of the visit to Yellowknife of particular interest to the Study Group was the discussion it held with Mr. Brian Lewis, Chief of the Program Development Division, and Mr. Edward J. Oberst, Supervisor of the Educational Resource Center. The Northwest Territories has a reputation in Canadian education for program development for native children. During this discussion the Study Group heard a report on Territorial experiences in this matter and an indication of present trends. A vast array of curriculum materials and resources designed and produced in the Territories to support the program were displayed and described. The Study Group was left with the impression that the Territories have made a sustained and concerted effort to develop a school program which builds upon the culture and experiences of its native students.

It would be useful for the Assistant Superintendent, Instruction, if appointed, or others who may be engaged in curriculum materials development in the division, to visit this operation with a view to seeing the kinds of things produced and learning of the processes used.

The visit to the Rae-Edzo School had two major purposes. The first purpose was to enable

the Study Group to see what is being done in native education in a jurisdiction outside Alberta and the second purpose was to observe a school system which is almost completely controlled at the local level by an organization consisting almost entirely of native people.

Some years ago the Territorial government agreed to experiment with the idea of local control of education in a native community and encouraged the people of Rae and Edzo to establish the Rae-Edzo School Society, an incorporated body of locally elected people, to operate the school system under contract with the Territorial government. In large measure this arrangement was modelled on that found in Little Rock, Arizona, an arrangement which has received considerable publicity in native education circles and raised many hopes for a significant breakthrough in the education of native children.

It was in this aspect of the situation in this system that the Study Group was most interested.

By arrangement the visit coincided with a meeting of the Rae-Edzo School Society and the Study Group was permitted to attend and observe this meeting.

The Society consists of six members, nominated and elected by secret ballot in much the same way as in regular school elections in Alberta. Public interest in these elections has been high with approximately 70% of eligible voters participating. The term of office is two years. Three members of the Society are elected each year. The system has been in operation for four years and some present members are now serving a second term. Five of the six members are native while the sixth member is a resident priest.

The meeting observed by the Group was conducted in English and Dogrib with interpretations supplied by members. Several matters of personnel administration were dealt with and there was a discussion of the new budget being negotiated with the Territorial government. The Study Group was left with the impression that a local school authority of this nature can deal with personnel problems, particularly those involving local residents, very effectively. The possible effectiveness of this arrangement with respect to other matters of administration was impossible to judge from this brief visit.

Although slightly more than 340 students are registered in this school, the average daily attendance is very low, ranging from 60-70%. The school is staffed with 16 certificated teachers, 2 non-certificated kindergarten instructors and one physical education instructor. In contrast to Northland the turnover in staff is very low. The principal has been there for several years and he and members of the School Society become involved in the interview and selection of new teachers.

The principal was unable to provide supporting objective evidence but offered a subjective opinion that the local autonomy in school matters enjoyed by the native people of Rae and Edzo makes a significant difference in the education of the children there. However, no ready figures were available on the drop-out rate or on the number of students who continue their schooling beyond the grade nine available in the school.

The entire school plant, including the attached student residence, was very impressive. It is much larger than one would normally expect to find in a community of this size. Probably some of this is due to the role played by the school in adult education in practical arts, offered in the home economics and industrial arts facilities. The need for student residences appears to have been grossly over-estimated. Living accommodations were provided for up to 150 students but only 13 were in residence at the time of the visit.

The total staff on the payroll of this school system, including the sixteen teachers, is fifty-three. Twenty-nine of these are associated with the school in some direct instructional or assisting role, fourteen of them are listed in the administration section, including three bus drivers and several school maintenance personnel including six janitors. Another ten people are employed in the residence housing thirteen students and in the school cafeteria which feeds the resident students and provides a hot lunch to the entire student body. By Northland standards the funding appears to be very generous.

Even on the basis of such a short visit it was apparent to the Study Group that there are both positive and negative aspects to this experiment in school governance and operation. Native people have become involved in the operation and administration of a school to an extent not encountered elsewhere by the Study Group. Undoubtedly this involvement has resulted in the development of local leadership and administration skills and probably in some greater degree of acceptance of an outside institution as evidenced by participation in school activities by members of the two communities. This has not been achieved, however, without very generous expenditures of money for both capital and operational costs. These have also helped to retain competent teaching staff and create working conditions in which they can be most effective in the situation. From the perspective of the Study Group, the greatest disappointment was a lack of clear evidence that this form of local governance, and the recognition of the native people and culture which it implies, has done much to relieve the drop-out problem and lessen the general disinterest in education beyond a basic minimum.

Nor was there evidence that any really different and distinctive educational program had been developed. Such native or cultural components as there were were in the nature of appendages rather than of really different curricular content or process.

The Study Group does not presume to make any final judgments about the experiement in Rae-Edzo and is well aware that a four-year trial period is not necessarily long enough for the full benefits of the arrangement to begin to emerge. It may be wise for Northland to maintain some kind of occasional contact with Rae-Edzo to determine what lessons in the experiment might be of value to Northland.

## Frontier School Division

The situation outside Alberta which most closely resembles the arrangement in Northland is found in the Frontier School Division in Northern Manitoba, a not unusual condition since Northland School Division was the model for Frontier when it was organized in 1965. Officials of the Manitoba Department of Education visited Alberta and conferred with officials of Northland and the Alberta Department of Education before the establishment of Frontier School Division.

Frontier School Division with headquarters in Winnipeg and field offices at Thompson and Dauphin consists of thirty-four schools scattered over a geographic area covering more than one-half the Province of Manitoba and serving approximately 5400 students, nearly all of native descent. It differs from Northland primarily in that it is governed by an official trustee, its schools on the average are considerably larger, and it operates a central residential high school.

Since governance was a topic of great interest to the Study Group a significant portion of the discussions in Winnipeg was devoted to this topic.

Unlike Northland which has graduated from an official trustee to an appointed board of trustees from various government departments

to an appointed board of trustees the majority of whom reside within the school division, Frontier has not moved beyond the official trustee stage of development. The official trustee is an employee of the Manitoba Department of Education and the location of Frontier's central office in the building which houses the Department of Education ensures a very close and continuous liaison between the official trustee and the senior members of the Department.

The official trustee is assisted by a central advisory committee consisting of seven community representatives, one from each of seven regions. The members of this committee are elected and their major functions are to act in an advisory capacity to the official trustee and maintain good communications with the communities within their regions. The committee meets with the official trustee and his senior staff three times per school year. Committee members are paid a per diem honorarium and expenses for regional and central activities.

One recent special activity of the central advisory committee was to study, at the request of the Minister of Education, the matter of governance of Frontier. Last January, the committee recommended to the Minister that Frontier be governed by an elected school board. At the date of the visit this recommendation was still under consideration and no response had been received. It was subsequently reported in the press that the Minister was proposing the holding of a plebiscite within the communities served seeking the residents' views on a number of possibilities.

At the local level Frontier has a school committee in every community it serves. These are considered to be an important element in the system of governance and much effort is expended in their formation and maintenance. Toward this end Frontier has taken the following steps:

1) Significant responsibilities and duties have been delegated to the local school committees. These are not uniform throughout the communities but depend on informal negotiation between the local school committee and the official trustee. For example, a committee wishing to exercise local control over community use of school facilities can arrange to have this responsibility transferred to it. Committees concern themselves with local selection and approval of paraprofessional and custodial staff, school bus drivers, and, in some cases, in the selection of teachers and principals. They arrange for local discussion of school matters and have recently shown a great interest in upward extension of school programs in local schools. They approve and sponsor educational tours, press for improvement of school facilities, make representations about teachers unpopular in the community and serve as local contact people for officials of Frontier during their visits.

2) Each local school committee is eligible to receive an annual grant from Frontier to finance certain of its activities. This grant is received in lump form by cheque and an accounting for its expenditures is required before the next annual payment is made. At the moment the grant is calculated on the following basis. There is a basic $200 allowance per school plus $3.40 for each student in excess of 30, to a maximum of $1000 per local school committee. The provision of this grant enables local school committees to undertake activities which help solve locally perceived problems, to promote some local aspirations and gives the committees a sense of achievement and justification for existence.

3) Another practice in Frontier, one not found in Northland, is the employment of a Community Liaison Secretary of native background. This person, a graduage of Frontier Collegiate Institute, has the responsibility of helping local school committees to achieve

their goals and improving the two-way communication between Frontier and these committees. He attends as many local and regional meetings as possible and ensures that minutes of these meetings are forwarded to the official trustee. In return local committees receive copies of the minutes of the official school board meetings held by the official trustee.

Local School Committees range in size from three to nine members. They meet at least once a month and frequently call special meetings to accommodate outside visitors. They are not paid honoraria for their meetings but do recover expenses incurred in their work.

Another area which received some attention was that of staffing. Frontier has a considerable supervisory staff consisting of a field superintendent, three assistant field superintendents, a supervisor of library services assisted by a library consultant, a community liaison secretary, a student placement officer assisted by a counsellor, and a learning consultant. Consideration is now being given to the employment of two additional assistant field superintendents.

Officials of Frontier feel that they have good continuity of teaching staffs. The annual turnover is about 30% and the number of principalships which change averages about seven per year. Most new teachers are recruited in Manitoba and recruitment trips outside the province are very rare. There is a disproportionate number of first-year teachers on staff indicating a reluctance on the part of experienced teachers to work in northern schools.

As in Northland Frontier is reluctant to have the best salary grid in the province. There is a northern allowance which is negotiated as a part of the salary agreement, this allowance currently ranging from $225-$1,000 with different scales applying to single and married teachers. The salary agreement also provides travel and moving allowances to teachers. In most circumstances Frontier reimburses teachers for expenses exceeding $25 on their trips into and out from the communities at the beginning and end of the school year and whenever they are requested to travel to in-service training meetings or on other divisional business. A moving allowance of up to $450 may be paid to a married teacher assigned an unfurnished teacherage, this payment being received after three years of service.

Divisionally owned teacher housing is available in all communities and rents reflect a fair degree of subsidization. Teacherages are usually well-furnished and are rented with utilities included. In January, 1975, Frontier had approximately 235 teachers in divisional housing at an average cost of $73 per month per teacher. The ratio of teacherages to teachers is higher in Frontier than in Northland. Frontier also makes much less use of mobile housing than Northland.

A maintenance staff of considerable proportion is employed by Frontier and comes under the ultimate direction of the secretary-treasurer. A maintenance supervisor is located in Winnipeg. The school division is divided into three areas for maintenance purposes with a maintenance foreman and two assistants stationed in each area. The foremen are generalists and their assistants are usually journeymen tradesmen. Over the entire school division these assistants include two electricians, two carpenters, and two plumbers. These nine men live in several different communities throughout the division and, where advantageous, the three crews exchange services between areas. In addition, Frontier has a five-year painting program and employs two painters on an hourly basis and assigns them to work as required anywhere in the division.

The maintenance crew looks after 236 teacherages and 35 schools.

The emphasis is on preventive maintenance and Frontier has a policy that each school must

be visited at least once a month by someone in the maintenance crew. Good communication is maintained between the maintenance foremen and the school principals and maintenance crews are able to go into isolated communities properly supplied with tools and materials for the work which must be done. Emergency calls are usually not permitted to interrupt work already in progress and are answered by maintenance staff between jobs or by outside tradesmen.

There is a teacherage inspection program in which teacherages with new occupants are inspected in September and October and teacherages soon to be vacated by their occupants are inspected in May and June.

At the local school level each school custodian is given a basic training program in which he is taught to do simple maintenance tasks around the school Each custodian is also provided with a basic set of tools, in the value of $277, in a padlocked box. Caretakers undertake to replace lost tools at their own expense. Broken tools are replaced by Frontier on submission of the broken tools.

In budgeting matters Frontier is treated by the Manitoba Department of Education in the same way as any other school division. Its budget is submitted to the Public Schools Finance Baord which scrutinizes it and passes judgment on it. Because of the close liaison between the official trustee and the Deputy Minister, who is also chairman of the Public Schools Finance Board, there is seldom any serious question of the submitted budgets. Frontier qualifies for all the regular school grants and receives a special additional grant which compensates it for its lack of local tax revenue and finances extraordinary expenditures not faced by other divisions. The official trustee and his field superintendent both believe that Frontier has been treated very favorably in financial matters by the Manitoba Department of Education.

School construction in Manitoba is financed differently than in Alberta. The Manitoba Department of Education bears the total cost of approved new construction. Construction costs are therefore not reflected in the financial statements of Frontier. Some school construction in Frontier is planned and supervised by the Department of Public Works in consultation with Frontier. Other projects are supervised through all their phases by divisional personnel.

The Study Group was informed that Frontier provides all its school principals with a petty cash fund ranging from $25 to $75, and in addition, Frontier principals are authorized to arrange local work in emergencies to a maximum of $100.

During its fall visits to schools the Study Group heard it urged by principals that they have access to a petty cash fund. Later in the year the divisional board authorized such an arrangement.

While no detailed statistics were available in Manitoba the Study Group was led to believe that the student drop-out problem is not different from the situation in Alberta.

Frontier has approximately 800 students registered in grades 9-12. Of these, about 180 are in the Frontier Collegiate Institute at Cranberry Portage, the only complete high school operated by Frontier. Others are found in local schools with partial high school programs or in the Home Placement Program. This program enables high school students in Frontier to go to any high school of their choice with financial assistance from Frontier and the support and personal assistance of the Home Placement Officer and his assistant.

During the past few years there has been a very serious drop in school enrolment at Frontier Collegiate. At its peak it registered over 400 students and student residences were built for over 300 of them. At present

there are only 120 students in residence and several units are completely closed. This collegiate has become a very expensive operation with an estimated cost of over $5000 per student per year.

The decline of student enrolment in the collegiate is traced to a strong desire of parents to keep their children at home, or close to home, as long as possible. This has led to strong local pressure for upward extension of school programs in local schools and to increasing use of the home placement program which allows students to attend high school near enough to permit home visits on weekends.

The future of Frontier Collegiate is very uncertain. It is expected to operate with reduced staff for one more school year. No one would make any predictions beyond that point.

The Department of Northern Saskatchewan

Because the discussions held in La Ronge were considerably shorter the following description of the situation in Northern Saskatchewan will be less comprehensive than the one given for Northern Manitoba.

The Department of Northern Saskatchewan was created pursuant to an act of the Saskatchewan Legislature, May 1, 1972, as a single agency, a regional government department, to facilitate development and administration of northern programs designed specifically to meet northern requirements. Approximately half the area of the province comes under the purview of this department. The Academic Education Branch of this department plays the role occupied by the Saskatchewan Department of Education elsewhere in the province.

Another level of educational administration in this area is occupied by school boards. There are three of these, two of which serve single, reasonably well-developed communities and operate in much the same way as any other school board in the province. The third school board, known as the Northern School Board, is analagous to the Northland School Division. It operates a considerable number of schools in isolated, underdeveloped communities.

The lowest level of administration is the local school board found in each northern community. These are analagous to the local school committees found in Frontier School Division in Manitoba.

The relationship between the Academic Education Branch and the Northern School Board is much closer than that found between either Northland or Frontier and its respective Department of Education. Until very recently, the Director of the Academic Education Branch was a member of the Northern School Board. Two regional superintendents employed by the Branch are attached to the Northern School Board. The Branch also employs a chief of curriculum, a materials developer, a native language consultant and an ethno-historian, all of whom have a close working relationship with the staff of the Northern School Board.

The Northern School Board consists of eight local residents appointed by the Minister of Education. It is headquartered in Prince Albert and operates a total of 27 schools serving approximately 5000 students, who are taught by 220 certificated teachers and 38 native paraprofessionals. About 10 of the certificated teachers are of native background.

A reorganization of the Northern School Board is now under way. In November of 1975, the appointed board will be replaced by a board elected in the manner used elsewhere in Saskatchewan. The Branch regional superintendents are now being replaced by board appointees. Both developments are seen as measures of increased local independence and self-government.

There is a local school board in every one of the 22 communities served by the Northern

School Board. This is in sharp contrast to the situation two years ago when there were very few. These boards serve primarily in an advisory capacity and have no status in law but are governed by regulations of the Branch. They have no financial resources but consideration is now being given to the provision of per-capita grants.

Local school boards usually consist of three members who are elected in open public meetings for three-year terms. No honoraria are provided but certain expenses are paid.

Liaison with the Northern School Board is maintained through a full-time consultant provided for this purpose -- much as in Manitoba.

Members of the local school board serve as community contact people when school visitors arrive. They usually control community use of school facilities. In some cases local school boards become involved in teacher recruitment and participate in interviews and selections of candidates.

School buildings requested by the Northern School Board and approved by the Academic Education Branch are provided by the Buildings Branch of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. Local communities and educators are consulted in the planning processes but all other operations, including financing, are carried on by the Buildings Branch. Home economics classrooms, industrial arts labs and school gymnasia are built for community as well as for school use and are often built larger and equipped differently to accommodate this additional use.

Because of the rapid growth of some communities and other exigencies fairly extensive use has been made of portable classrooms. This, however, is not regarded to be a good practice and permanent construction is preferred wherever possible.

The Buildings Branch is also responsible for the maintenance of all Northern School Board schools. This service is provided under contract. The Study Group was advised that this arrangement is not entirely a happy one, as it is very costly and the Buildings Branch does not have the capacity to do a good job of maintenance in all schools.

The drop-out situation in Northern Saskatchewan did not appear to be any better than it is in Northland or Frontier School Divisions. One approach to this problem consists of trying to make schools more attractive to native children and their parents by improving the physical facilities, modifying the curriculum and providing for greater local self-determination in some school matters. Schools are increasingly being supplied with gymnasia, home economics classrooms, and industrial arts laboratories. It is the policy of the Northern School Board to offer home economics and industrial arts in all schools with seven or more classrooms. Another policy requires that instruction be offered in K-9 in every community.

Children who must leave home for further education are assisted through a home placement program. Assistance is provided in locating and arranging boarding homes, in registration at the new school, and by occasional further contact with such students which helps provide the external support many of them require during a difficult period of social and academic adjustment.

School authorities in Northern Saskatchewan seem to have taken a more serious approach to curriculum modification and inclusion of native languages and culture than in either Northland or Frontier. There are the usual modifications of industrial arts which place a heavy emphasis on small motors and of home economics which recognize some of the physical limitations of the average native home. Some new courses are being developed with funding from an innovative projects program including courses in outdoor

education, aviation maintenance, and native handicrafts.

Two unusual programs, however, were not encountered in the other provinces in quite the form found here. Within the last year the Academic Education Branch has hired an ethno-historian and a native language consultant.

The creation of the position of ethnohistorian was an attempt to remedy what was seen to be a serious curriculum deficiency, namely, its barreness with respect to the study of the history and culture of northern peoples. The ethno-historian is conducting research into written materials of historical interest, compiling an extensive bibliography, collecting a library of written materials of importance to northern history, making tape recordings of the voices and stories of older people, and is presently writing a syllabus for a social studies course at the junior high school level in consultation with two teachers who will pilot the syllabus during the next school year.

The assignment of the native language consultant is to develop a native language program which can be used in schools on a local option basis. The first emphasis is on oral language but a written program, using alphabetics rather than syllabics, is now being developed. Instruction is offered by local native people. Four schools now offer a program in the Cree language in grades 1 - 3 and it is hoped to expand the program to include ten schools during the next school year. The supervisor in charge of this program was most emphatic that it would be introduced into a school only at the request of the community. It is not designed to promote Cree as an imposed program from without.

In respect to the teaching staff of the Northern School Board, the Study Group learned that teacher turnover is about 40% per year and this rate now appears to be declining. There is much greater stability in the principalship, with only a 5-10% turnover here. Among other things, the board and its officials try to make teachers feel that they are an important part of the school system. Teaching staffs are given control over a part of the instructional budget which is allotted to individual schools. The teacher organization in the system is very active and it has a non-voting representative present at all meetings of the Northern School Board.

In Saskatchewan the basic teacher salary grid is negotiated at the provincial level and applies to northern Saskatchewan. Teachers receive an additional northern allowance which ranges from $875 to $2375. Teacher housing is heavily subsidized with houses, furnishings, and utilities being available for $85 - $135 per month. For teachers who prefer to own their homes there is a cash subsidy of $40 per month.

Teachers also receive travel expenses once a year for a convention and are paid travel expenses into the school at the beginning of the year. Personal effects are also moved in at the expense of the board.

## A Summary of Impressions

During the travels just described the Study Group was struck by the great similarity of problems in northern education in the four jurisdictions under consideration. Almost without exception these jurisdictions try to cope with very high student drop-out rates, high staff turnovers, serious difficulties in maintenance, the need to provide services normally available from other municipal bodies, the need to provide and subsidize housing with all its attendant problems, and other pressing matters, nearly all of which are further complicated by the geographic and social isolation of the communities served. Because of all these problems each jurisdiction is a very costly operation and requires special funding.

Differences, too, were evident to the Study Group. In governance, Rae-Edzo has been

granted almost total local self-determination, subject, of course, to funding from the Territorial Government. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan have encouraged more vigorously the creation and activities of local school committees, than has Northland. On the other hand, Frontier is still operated by an official trustee, while both Alberta and Saskatchewan have appointed boards with resident members. In all cases there is a definite trend of events leading to greater local self-determination in school affairs.

Another area in which there are differences even while there are similarities is in regard to teacher retention. Except for Rae-Edzo, which has a very good retention rate, the turnover is generally high with Northland having the least enviable record while Frontier and Northern Saskatchewan do somewhat better. It was also noted that both Frontier and Northern Saskatchewan enjoy much greater stability in the principalship than does Northland. However, it should be noted that both these systems are larger and have a greater number of fair-sized schools making their principalships more attractive to the incumbents.

The relationships between the northern school jurisdictions and their respective Departments of Education also vary widely. Rae-Edzo enjoys greatest independence and has least liaison. The Study Group noted the very close liaison and working relationships found in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan the Study Group occasionally had difficulty in distinguishing between the activities of the Academic Education Branch and the Northern School Board. It should be noted, however, that recent developments there will probably lessen this close relationship to some degree.

While Northland probably enjoys the lowest student/teacher ratio and makes greater use of local, native paraprofessionals, except for Rae-Edzo, it is eclipsed in other staff by both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Both these systems, even after making allowances for their larger student populations, appear to have more extensive central office supervisory and specialist services, and certainly a much larger number of people involved in maintenance.

Note was also taken of the manner in which school buildings are supplied. There are fundamental differences of relationships between the school authorities and the respective provinces in that in Manitoba and Saskatchewan funds for school buildings are provided directly by the provinces on a pay-as-you-go basis. The school authorities do not become involved in school building financing.

Finally, of these four jurisdictions Northland, in recent years, seems to have taken least interest in native language and culture and in curriculum modification. It should be noted, however, that there is some element of risk in this judgement in that while the Study Group has had extensive contact with Northland it has only heard official accounts of programs in the other jurisdictions.

One final impression should be recorded here. The Study Group found its discussions with the officials of these jurisdictions very interesting and useful and was given the impression that this feeling was reciprocated by these officials. At one time, commencing in 1963, an annual Schools in the Forest Conference was held which gave officials of the three provincial northern systems an opportunity to meet occasionally. Later events changed the nature of this conference and there is now no ready occasion for these people to meet. It would be most useful for representatives of the three jurisdictions to meet from time to time.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

## Exclusions

The terms of reference of the Study Group required it to consider "the area and communities served by the Division, including consideration of the desirablility of including territory not now served or excluding territory now part of the Division".

The Group received no recommendations for the addition of territory, or for the extension of service to any additional community. A possible exception to the above statement was a suggestion that a school be operated at Indian Cabins, or the transfer of the Steen River school to that community. Indian Cabins children are transported to the one room school at Steen River. Having regard to the small number of pupils involved and the uncertainty of the populations in both places the Group could not recommend any change in the present arrangements. These, however, will need to be kept under constant review by the division.

In the matter of exclusions a report was made to the Minister of Education dated January 16, 1975 which recommended that certain schools be placed under the jurisdiction of other school authorities. These were Elk-South Wapiti, Menno-Simons, Brewster's Camp and Zama. It was recommended that Elk and South Wapiti be joined to Grovedale School District, that Menno-Simons go to Fairview School Division and the other two to Fort Vermilion School Division. It was also recommended that Elk School District and South Wapiti School District become integral parts of Grovedale School District to which their pupils are transported.

Consideration was given to the transfer of Calling Lake, Steen River, A.C. McCully (Elizabeth Colony) and J. F. Dion (Fishing Lake) to other divisions or counties but the decision of the Study Group was to make no recommendations to this effect.

Two factors, contradictory in their import at times, were chiefly in the minds of the Group, as questions of transfer were considered.

It is clear that geographical location is of consequence. If a school can be serviced from a jurisdictional headquarters within easy driving distance there would appear to be the probability of more immediate and more economical attention to the school's needs.

Nevertheless, in the opinion of the Study Group there is another factor that may weigh, for the time being at least, more heavily. Northland has a special interest in and responsibility for schools comprising wholly or largely native children. While it may at times be perplexed as to the best programs and policies to pursue it at least is conscious of the special nature of its mandate. Further, government, through the Department of Education, is aware of its special needs and funds it accordingly. Northland children are provided free books and supplies on a more generous basis than applies in most divisions and counties. The rationale of this is that since such a large percentage of the parents are in poor economic circumstances the children would frequently be at school without what they need. In order for school to proceed and the teachers not to be continually frustrated or improvising to the detriment of their work, books and supplies must be available.

The division, again with departmental knowledge and support, provides teacher-aides, counsellor-aides, and Early Childhood Services programs. These are valuable, essential, in most Northland situations. The fear of the Study Group is that if one native school only is attached to a division or county its special needs may receive little attention and that the school board or committee might find it difficult to justify to its other residents special treatment

for one school.

In the cases of Elk-South Wapiti, Menno-Simons, Zama and Brewster's Camp, referred to above, these are schools serving white populations. They are outside the broad range of interest of Northland, i.e., its native children's mandate. The Study Group can see no reason why, when they are adjacent to other jurisdictions, they ought not to be served by them. It can see no reason, for example, why having regard to their economies, they should be given books and supplies not available to their neighbors or others of similar economic status. In each case geography and proximity of schools served by another jurisdiction point to economy in servicing.

Two other cases should be mentioned.

North of Ft. McMurray some thirty-five miles is Northland's three room school at Ft. McKay. South of Ft. McMurray, about the same distance, is Anzac. When visited by the Group a one-room school operated at Anzac but a bus also was operated to Ft. McMurray taking pupils to both public and separate schools. Early in the school year, pursuant to a meeting with parents by officers of the division, the school was closed and all pupils are now bused to Ft. McMurray.

The Study Group was given correspondence indicating that the public school board wished to expand its area of financial support by the formation of a division centered on Ft. McMurray. The Group met with the school board and also with officers, including the chairman, of the separate board.

There are some obvious advantages to having the two adjacent communities served from Ft. McMurray. Maintenance of Ft. McKay ought to be handled more expeditiously. There might be some advantage to having Anzac bus operations under the same jurisdictions as the schools attended.

The Study Group could not see the establishment of a division as feasible. For one thing the Ft. McMurray Separate district would not be part of it and the Anzac children chiefly attend the separate schools. Then there is the matter of subdivisions and distribution of trustees. Ft. McKay and Anzac, each alone, seem scarcely entitled to subdivision status in relation to Ft. McMurray itself. Further, especially in respect of Ft. McKay, it is doubted that its special needs, which are great, and its financial burden, could be expected to receive whole-hearted and generous support from Ft. McMurray which is having its own financial problems and which are the cause of its interest in some sort of expansion.

Since its concern is really financial, and not educational service to marginal areas, the Study Group has recommended, separately, that the further extension of the joint public-separate boundaries north be considered, to take in the Syncrude establishment. Because the relationship of Syncrude to Ft. McMurray is essentially the same as that of Great Canadian Oil Sands it seems to be an anomaly for the latter to be in the districts and the former outside.

The circumstances of Susa Creek-Muskeg River, adjacent to Grande Cache, were looked into: The pupils from these communities are bused to Grande Cache by Northland. Grande Cache has a considerable number of native children within its school district borders and runs buses of its own. The view of the Study Group is that in this case the aim should be to have Susa Creek-Muskeg River included within Grande Cache. A separate report has been submitted in respect of this.

The immediate impediment is that Grande Cache is a New Town with schools being operated as a part of a combined jurisdiction. There was said to be some possibility of separation of municipal and school functions. Not until a school district having independent existence

comes back into being is it possible for the Susa Creek-Muskeg River area to be included in some form of revised divisional or other organization. If and when such comes about provision should be made for some guaranteed representation of native people on the school board.

All of the above cases, and no doubt others from time to time, require occasional review by the division and by the Department of Education as circumstances change.

CHAPTER TWENTY

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Throughout the text of this report there have appeared observations, impressions, findings, proposals and suggestions. This chapter attempts to draw together the chief ones of these, to express some generalized findings, and to list the most important recommendations.

First the findings and impressions are set forth.

Northland School Division cannot be regarded as being a school division similar to school divisions and counties elsewhere in Alberta. Only Fort Vermilion, and it only partially so, has any considerable number of its characteristics.

a) Distances are enormous, access is limited throughout much of its area, communication is often slow and uncertain;

b) The communities served, though varying in degree, are often isolated and lacking in services taken for granted throughout Alberta;

c) Water, sewer, sometimes power, are not available through municipal or other channels. Hence the division must become an installer and operator of utilities. In respect of water there is much expense and frustration in attempting to find a source of supply;

d) Because otherwise there would be no housing for teachers, and hence no teachers, the division has to be in the housing business for almost all its staff. This results in expense in a variety of directions, in much administrative effort, and compounds the problems of maintenance;

e) The pupils in the schools, in large measure, enter and proceed through school beset by a number of handicaps not to be found generally throughout Alberta in relation to the school program as currently carried forward. These may include coming to school speaking only a language other than English, an absence of school reinforcing activities and materials in the homes, low attendance levels, various defects arising from low economic status, constriction of general knowledge of the sort useful to the school curriculum, and sometimes the social structure and nature of the community;

f) The rapid turnover of teacners, and perhaps even more serious, of principals, leaves a great deal to be desired in terms of community and pupil rapport and understanding, in terms of school administration, in terms of continuity of program or development of special programs;

g) Supervision of schools and teachers - visits to evaluate progress and teaching effectiveness, to give advice and encouragement, and to promote techniques - appear to be at a low ebb because there are not enough visits, they are not long enough, and often do not get down to specifics;

h) Pupil progress is poor when evaluated in terms of reading competence, oral participation, retardation, whether by grade reached or by competence in the grade nominally promoted into, drop-outs and limited numbers proceeding to high school;

i) The administration has been weakened by much change-over of staff, instructional supervisory staff, maintenance staff, office staff. Both planning and execution must have suffered;

j) School plants, school grounds, teachers residences, and especially the maintenance thereof, leave much to be desired.

The above list could be extended, especially in detail and particularization, but will suffice to introduce the following general observation.

Conceding that there are inherent geographical and logistics problems that cannot be wafted away, conceding that there are human and social conditions and circumstances that make teaching and learning difficult, conceding that an infusion of money cannot possibly cure or counteract all the ills of the schools, conceding that there have been instances of seeming over-expenditure to accomplish certain ends, especially in relation to buildings and maintenance and that some economies can surely be achieved by better planning, supervision and control, nevertheless the Study Group concludes that a decision in terms of financial support of the division is one that has to be faced.

The question seems to be, "Are all those concerned, including the provincial government, content for matters to proceed much as they now are, except perhaps for some reorganization of the manner of governance and of administration of the division, and the development of such economies and efficiencies as can be effected within the present general range of financial support? Or is something better desired?"

As has several times been said in this report the situation which exists is not one that the schools or school system can in some miraculous manner, overnight, correct. It is only one factor in a totality of conditions and circumstances affecting the progress, the learning success, of the children.

Yet, in so far as the school can do its part to improve the situation, which is by no means a inconsiderable part, no single factor stands so high, or is so much in need of improvement, as the teaching staff. In some degree this is a matter quality, and will always be so, but immediately, and most obviously, it is a matter of continuity. This is especially true in respect of principals of schools. If greater continuity is not achieved the Study Group sees little likelihood of change or improvement in respect of results.

While some of the recommendations made have a direct virtue, such as better maintenance preserving school plant, the Group sees almost everything recommended as having a direct or indirect contribution to improved teacher morale, to the probability of staff being more frequently content to remain longer, and to their being more effective in developing appropriate instructional techniques.

It this worth paying for? The Study Group thinks that it is. The alternative seems to be a retention of the status quo with little, if any, improvement in school results, and no enhanced contribution to the lives of the pupils, to the communities in which they live, and to the wider society into which they must increasingly penetrate or with which they must relate.

The following is a bringing together of the chief recommendations appearing in the various chapters of the report.

Chapter 4

4.1 That Northland School Division prepare and adopt a statement of purposes and philosophy.

Chapter 5

5.1 That the board of trustees consist of nine members, all appointed by the Minister of Education comprising

a) an appointed chairman,

b) an officer of the Department of Education,

c) seven residents of the division, each representing a subdivision;

5.2 That Treaty Indians resident in communities served by Northland be eligible for appointment, i.e. be deemed to be residents of the division;

5.3 That the superintendent of schools be the chief executive officer, and that he be

resident at Peace River;

5.4 That the departmental officer on the board be a somewhat senior person in the Department;

5.5 That the formation of local school committees be diligently pursued, and to that end there be appointed an organizer of and adviser to local committees;

5.6

a) That each local committee appoint a school representative;

b) That the school representatives assemble in subdivisional or regional meetings for discussion and information about divisional affairs;

c) That once a year there be a division-wide meeting of school representatives;

d) That at appropriate meetings, b or c, recommendations be made to the Minister of persons to fill impending vacancies on the board;

e) That honoraria and expenses be provided for local committee members and school representatives for approved meetings;

f) That local school committees be assigned, or permitted, significant functions and that they have budgets under their jurisdictions;

5.7 That minutes of divisional board meetings be made available to local committees and to schools;

5.8 That an annual report be required from the divisional board and that it be available to interested persons.

Chapter 6

6.1 That the development and use of materials in harmony with the children's environments be encouraged;

6.2 That teachers and school programs adopt a positive attitude towards the pupils' antecedents;

6.3 That increased information regarding the true progress of children in school be made available to parents, and be the subject of discussion with them;

6.4 That attempt be made to provide some increased availability of practical programs, in addition to, and supplementing, standard school offerings;

6.5 That the teacher-aide, counsellor-aide, and Early Childhood Services programs be continued, and the last extended;

6.6 That educational tours be encouraged and facilitated;

6.7 That local residents be involved in school programs when they have knowledge or skills that they can contribute;

6.8 That the Department of Education take the initiative in the establishment of some sort of curriculum center or agency having as its purpose the development of curriculum materials of usefulness not only in Northland but in other jurisdictions having considerable numbers of native pupils;

6.9 That the assistant superintendent of schools, instruction, prepare, or arrange for the preparation of, supplementary guides for the use of teachers giving advice as to desirable adaptations of the Alberta curriculum, and also as to useful materials available in relation thereto;

6.10 That the materials prepared in the 1974-75 curriculum center be given a full and fair opportunity to be classroom tested.

Chapter 7

7.1 That improvement of attendance of pupils continue to be sought by means other than prosecution;

7.2 That attempt be made to convince parents that success in school is dependent upon many non-school factors and influences and that only through home and community reinforcement of the school can success be achieved;

7.3 That the continuous progress plan continue to be studied and applied in so far as possible in the schools;

7.4 That pending implementation of a continuous progress plan, and while below grade achievement persists opportunity be given through a make-up year for pupils to be better prepared to cope with high school work.

Chapter 8

8.1 That a make-up year be optional for nominal grade 9 graduates before proceeding to high school;

8.2 That provision be made for grade 9 pupils about to graduate to visit a high school, preferably as guests of students of such schools;

8.3 That the offerings in divisional high school grades be appropriate to the accomplishments and prospects of the incoming classes;

8.4 That no plans be instituted for the operation of a dormitory high school;

8.5 That an improved home placement service be instituted to assist high school pupils in finding suitable places to live and also to be given more counselling and help in respect of educational and other problems;

8.6 That the possible virtues of an experimental group home in one center where Northland pupils go for high school be studied.

Chapter 9

9.1 That care be taken not to engage teachers whose speech patterns and accents may cause pupils difficulty;

9.2 That contact be made with teachers in inter-cultural programs at universities; and that such students be encouraged to visit Northland schools;

9.3 That recruitment materials be kept up to date;

9.4 That the romance of the North and the possibility of altruistic service be capitalized upon;

9.5 That the possibility of obtaining teachers from other school jurisdictions for a year or more of service without severance of contract be explored;

9.6 That an internship program be established;

9.7 That the level of bursary support for education students be raised;

9.8 That attempt be made to recruit teachers more frequently for specific schools;

9.9 That the use of temporary contracts be reduced;

9.10 That the aesthetics of schools and residences be improved;

9.11 That maintenance of schools and residences be improved;

9.12 That delivery of supplies be more prompt;

9.13 That better communication, including acknowledgment of messages, be instituted;

9.14 That supervisory services be increased;

9.15 That the isolation bonus scale be revised;

9.16 That increased provision be made for travel subsidies for teachers;

9.17 That a bonus be paid to teachers having capacity in a native language;

9.18 That the orientation program for teachers be continued and constantly reviewed;

9.19 That provision be made for a representative of the A.T.A. Local to attend board meetings;

9.20 That principals be recognized as essential and important members of the total administrative structure.

Chapter 10

10.1 That the supervisory staff which visits schools be increased so that visits may be more frequent, more thorough, and of longer duration;

10.2 That the staff comprise:

a) Associate superintendent

b) Two assistant superintendents

c) Supervisor of instruction

d) Supervisor of pupil personnel services

e) Director of Early Childhood Services

f) Facilitators as available through the Educational Opportunities Fund, to be continued as needed should E.O.F. support be discontinued;

10.3 That increased use be made of the Department of Education regional offices.

Chapter 11

11.1 That there be a diminishing use of portable classrooms;

11.2 That the combining of portables into aggregate structures be avoided;

11.3 That school buildings be provided in permanent communities such that they evoke a degree of admiration and respect;

11.4 That the feasibility of combining quarters for school, community and governmental services in one complex be studied by the several parties that might be involved;

11.5 That schools be provided without debenture issuing, i.e. to be paid for when built since all is a charge on government funds in any event;

11.6 That the possibility of buildings being erected for Northland by the Department of Housing and Public Works be further explored;

11.7 That school grounds be much improved and provision be made for adequate maintenance.

Chapter 12

12.1 That regular inspection and maintenance of teachers' residences be instituted;

12.2 That the grounds surrounding teachers' residences be made more attractive;

12.3 That attention be given to the aesthetics of the residences and their surroundings generally;

12.4 That individual units be made available to a greater degree;

12.5 That there be a transition to more permanent type homes.

Chapter 13

13.1 That there be an expansion of the permanent maintenance staff;

13.2 That a program of regular inspection and maintenance of school buildings be instituted;

13.3 That organization and expenditure control be improved;

13.4 That an agreed schedule of reimbursement to teachers be adopted to apply when accommodation is made available by them for lodging and meals;

13.5 That provision be made in new school buildings for a modest overnight sleeping facility;

13.6 That local caretakers be given, where they are, further instruction as to their duties and be helped to be able to do minor maintenance;

13.7 That further consultations take place to explore the feasibility of maintenance, or some of it, being assumed by the new Department of Government Services.

Chapter 14

14.1 That libraries be improved by

a) adding more books

b) discarding books of no value in the schools

c) improved shelving and display facilities where needed

d) improved library housekeeping and display

e) providing supervisory assistance

f) some degree of central ordering and control

g) provision of suitable lists for teachers to consult;

14.2 That the use of instructional equipment be monitored to avoid extensive lack of use;

14.3 That more help and encouragement be given to teachers regarding the use of instructional equipment;

14.4 That further equipment be supplied only when there is prospect of its effective use;

14.5 That there be a rotating stock of equipment at Peace River with items moving to and from schools in accordance with actual or prospective use;

14.6 That the provision and use of remedial reading devices be carefully looked into as a possible priority item.

Chapter 15

15.1 That sums owing from the Department of Northern and Indian Affairs be diligently pursued.

Chapter 16

16.1 That the administrative structure of the division be as outlined on the chart in chapter 16.

Chapter 17

17.1 That the isolation bonuses paid to teachers be revised, and that the Department of Education further examine the adequacy of its support level;

17.2 That improved procedures be adopted for budgeting and the consideration and approval of the division's special grant, including an early interim budget;

17.3 That a special grant be declared, subject to revision as circumstances develop, and that the final financial statement show a surplus or a deficit as the case may be;

17.4 That attempt be made, in cooperation with the Department, to reduce the necessity of borrowing for current purposes;

17.5 That the division seek an adjustment of its transportation grant;

17.6 That the budget meeting of the board consider the budget in greater detail, and as to policy significance;

17.7 That equipment ordering by schools be more closely monitored;

17.8 That the board examine regularly the relationship between its budget and its expenditures;

17.9 That the separation of capital and current accounts be closely regarded;

17.10 That proper approvals for short term loans be obtained;

17.11 That some officer be designated and be permitted to function as purchasing agent;

17.12 That an inventory control be instituted;

17.13 That the division seek from the government a policy of provision of buildings on a pay-as-you-go basis;

17.14 That districts be established at Zama City and Brewster's Camp, whether transfer to Fort Vermilion is to be effected or not;

17.15 That the requirement that the auditing be done by the Provincial Auditor be withdrawn.

Chapter 18

18.1 That a visit to the North West Territories Educational Resource Center be made by the appropriate divisional officer.

Chapter 19

19.1 That Elk and South Wapiti districts, together with intervening lands, be incorporated into Grovedale School District;

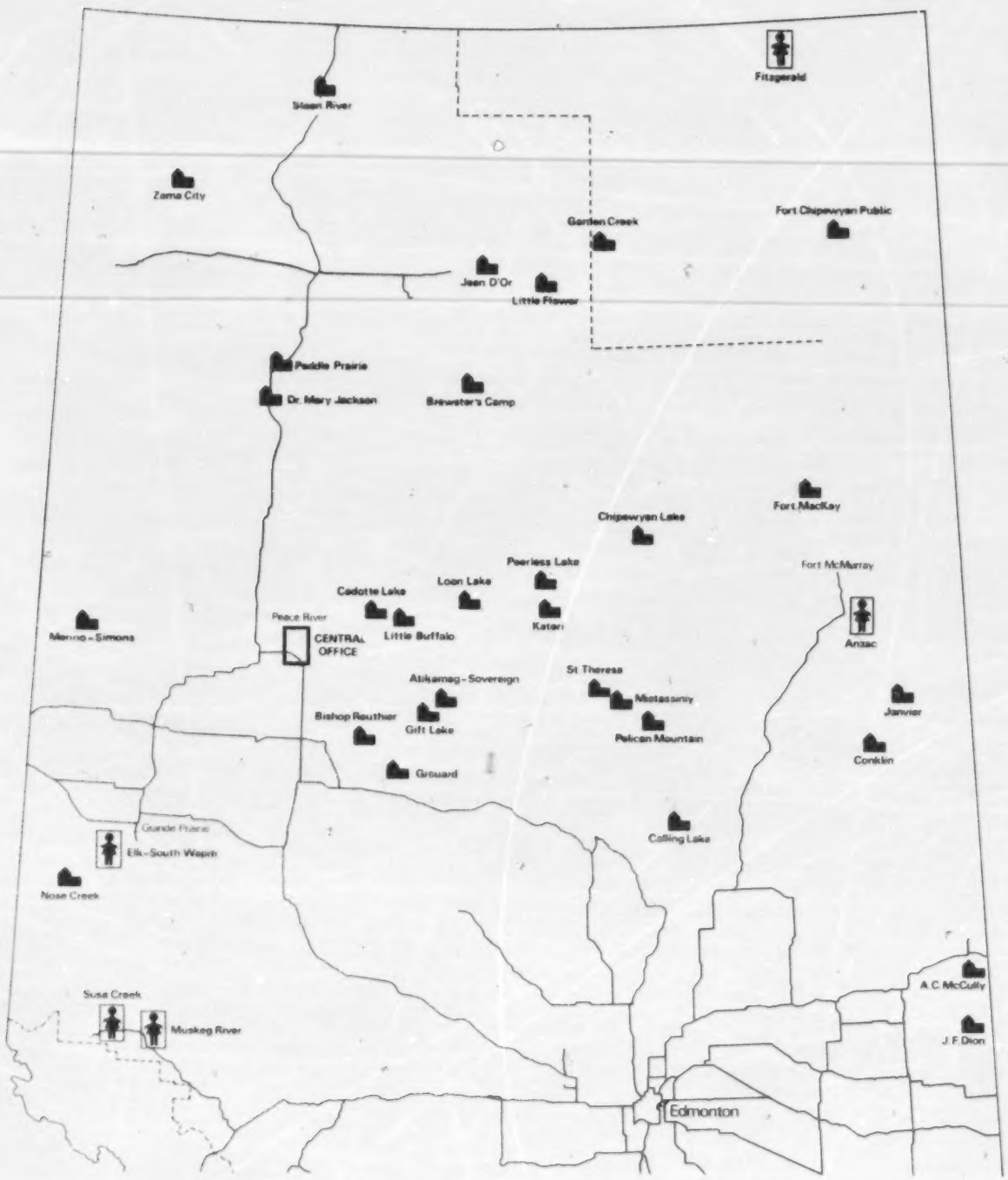
19.2 That the Menno-Simons school area be included within Fairview School Division;

19.3 That Zama City and Brewster's Camp be included in Fort Vermilion School Division, involving the formation of school districts;

19.4 That the Fort McMurray school districts, public and separate, be extended north to encompass the Syncrude operations;

19.5 That Susa Creek and Muskeg River be joined to Grande Cache when this becomes legally feasible, and that in so doing the native people be given representation on the school board.

APPENDICES




NORTHLAND SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 61

MINISTERIAL ORDER

Pursuant to section 9 of The Department of Education Act, I hereby appoint

(a) Dr. W.H. Swift - Chairman

(b) Dr. R.J. Carney

(c) Mr. D. Ewasiuk

to inquire into and report to me upon matters related to the Northland School Division No. 61 specified in the Appendix attached hereto.

Dated 4/ August, 1974.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

132

The Department of Education Act

The matters to be inquired into and reported upon are as follows:

(a) generally, to study and conduct an overall review and appraisal of the functions, administration, operation, and services of the Northland School Division No. 61;

(b) in particular, to inquire into

(i) the legal, legislative and administrative structure of the Division, and the effectiveness thereof;

(ii) the financing of the Division's operations, including its manner of budgeting, the sources of its funds, and the expenditure thereof;

(iii) the educational program of the Division, including the nature of the facilities, ancillary services, and the effectiveness of the schools, having regard to the circumstances in which each operates;

(iv) the area and communities served by the Division, including consideration of the desirability of including territory not now served, or excluding territory now part of the Division;

(v) the nature and effectiveness of services supplied to the communities served by the Division by other governmental agencies as they relate to the provision of school services;

(vi) such other matters as in the opinion of the Committee relate to and bear upon the effectiveness of the operations and services of the Division.

APPENDIX C

## THE ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

### Membership

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Russell Alook, Wabasca | Former student of Northland |
| Mr. Frank Blonke, Grouard | ATA representative |
| Mr. Sam Hardin, Fort McMurray | Former trustee |
| Dr. Ralph Sabey, Westlock | Former senior administrator |
| Mr. Robert Seenum, High Level | Indian community |
| Mr. Walter Swain, Edmonton | Metis Association of Alberta |

### Meetings Held

November 6, 1974

January 8, 1975

March 11, 1975

May 30, 1975

APPENDIX D

NORTHLAND COMMUNITIES VISITED BY THE STUDY GROUP

| | |
|---|---|
| Fort Chipewyan | September 10, 1974 |
| Fort MacKay | September 11 |
| Anzac | September 12 |
| Garden Creek | September 13 |
| Paddle Prairie | September 17 |
| Keg River (Dr. Mary Jackson School) | September 18 |
| Steen River | October 9 |
| Indian Cabins | October 9 |
| Menno Simons | October 15 |
| Calling Lake | October 23 |
| Elk and South Wapiti | October 29 |
| Nose Creek | October 30 |
| Jean D'Or | November 13 |
| Fox Lake (Little Flower School) | November 14 |
| Brewster's Camp | November 14 |
| Zama City | November 13, 14 |
| Sputinow (J. F. Dion School) | November 19 |
| Elizabeth Colony (A. C. McCully School) | November 20 |
| Susa Creek and Muskeg River | November 25 |
| Grouard | February 3, 1975 |
| Gift Lake | February 4 |
| Atikameg | February 5 |
| Pea Vine (Bishop Routhier School) | February 6 |
| Wabasca (St. Theresa School) | February 11 |
| Desmarais (Histassiniy School) | February 12 |
| Sandy Lake (Pelican Mountain School) | February 13 |
| Chipewyan Lakes | February 13 |
| Cadotte Lake | March 4 |
| Little Buffalo Lake | March 4 |
| Trout Lake (Kateri School) | March 5 |
| Peerless Lake | March 5 |
| Loon Lake | March 6 |
| Janvier | March 12 |
| Conklin | March 19 |

APPENDIX E

MEETINGS WITH NORTHLAND SCHOOL BOARD AND PERSONNEL

| | |
|---|---|
| August 21, 1974 | Board of Trustees and Table Officers |
| November 6 | Central Offices Education Supervisory Staff |
| December 10 | Randolph McKinnon, chairman, and Mary Gaucher, trustee |
| December 11 | Central Office Business Personnel |
| December 30 | Lloyd Chorney, teacher on educational leave |
| January 9, 1975 | Donald Weaver, Assistant Superintendent |
| January 14 | Curriculum Development Team, Edmonton |
| January 14 | James Ducharme, trustee |
| February 4 | Leona Willier, trustee<br>William Weber, trustee |
| February 10 | Clara Yellowknee, trustee |
| March 25 | Albina Jacknife, trustee |
| April 4 | Derek Allison, teacher on educational leave |
| June 11 | Randolph McKinnon and Central Office Business and Education Officials |

APPENDIX F

VISITS TO SCHOOLS AND

DISCUSSIONS WITH OFFICIALS OF OTHER SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| September 19, 1974 | Fort Vermilion School Division |
| October 9 | Upper Hay River Day School, Meander River, Alberta |
| October 10 | Fairview School Division Officers |
| October 23 | County of Athabasca |
| October 29 | Grovedale Public School District |
| October 30 | County of Grande Prairie |
| November 14 | Tall Cree Schools #1 and #2, Fort Vermilion School Division |
| November 19 | Assumption Day School, Chateh, Alberta |
| November 25 | Grande Cache Public School District |
| December 10 | Fairview School Division Board |
| December 17 | Fort McMurray Public School District |
| December 17 | Fort McMurray Separate School District |
| March 26, 1975 | Rae-Edzo School Society, N.W.T. |
| April 14, 15 | Frontier School Division, Winnipeg, Manitoba |
| April 16 | Frontier Collegiate Institute, Cranberry Portage, Manitoba |
| April 17 | Academic Education Branch, Department of Northern Saskatchewan, La Ronge, Saskatchewan, and Officers of Northern School Board |

APPENDIX G

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Study Group conducted public hearings in Edmonton on December 2 and 3, 1974, in Room 147 of the Alberta Vocational Center. These hearings were advertised in the Edmonton Journal and in Folio, staff bulletin at the University of Alberta. These hearings were intended to provide a formal opportunity for those organizations and individuals not located in Northland communities to present their views to the Study Group.

Five briefs were heard and discussed. They were:

1. Northland School Division #61-The First Three Years, by Dr. L. R. Gue.

2. Untitled brief by the Northland ATA Local No. 69, presented by Mr. Douglas McCulloch and Mr. Neil Davies.

3. Untitled brief by Mrs. Peggy Robbins.

4. Submission re: Northland School Division #61 by Dr. J. W. Chalmers.

5. A presentation to the Committee Inquiring Into the Problems and Future of Northland, by Dr. B. Y. Card.

APPENDIX H

DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

| | |
|---|---|
| September 26, 1974 | Saskatchewan Department of Education |
| October 3 | R. Mace, Metis Rehabilitation Branch |
| October 11 | R.V. Henning, Commissioner for Northeastern Alberta |
| October 22 | W. R. Duke, R. B. Budge, W. T. Worbets, and R. Penrice, Department of Education |
| December 12 | E. Dosdall and D. Robbins, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development |
| January 6, 1975 | B. L. Stringham, Department of Education |
| January 7 | R. Patry and R. L. Cross, Department of Municipal Affairs |
| January 16 | R. B. Budge and J. Clarke, Department of Education |
| January 17 | R. Penrice, Department of Education |
| January 29 | A. Isbister, Department of Municipal Affairs |
| February 26 | B. Rawson, Department of Health and Social Development |
| March 25 | N. McPherson, Director of Education; E. Oberst, Director of the Educational Resource Center; B. Lewis, Chief of Curriculum, Government of the Northwest Territories |
| April 15 | G. Monroe, Director, Native Education Branch, Manitoba Department of Education |
| April 17 | G. Lindgren, Director, Academic Education Branch, Department of Northern Saskatchewan |
| May 22 | W. A. B. Saunders, Department of Housing and Public Works; W. S. Davies, Department of Government Services |
| June 17 | W. E. Schell and T. W. Pizzey, Department of the Provincial Auditor |

## APPENDIX I

### OTHER DISCUSSIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| December 30, 1974 | Dr. W. Adams, former superintendent of Northland School Division |
| January 28, 1975 | Indian Education Center |
| February 27 | Fred Dumont, Coordinator, Project North |
| March 24 | Mrs. Isabel Steinhauer |
| April 9 | Dr. Evelyn Moore, Director, Indian Students' University Services Program, University of Calgary |
| May 5 | Dr. E. W. Van Dyke, Applied Research Associates Ltd., and Mr. C. M. McCaffery, Northern Development Group |
| June 19 | Mr. C. Boyce, Peace River Regional Planning Commission |

## APPENDIX J

### SEMINARS, INSTITUTES, AND OTHER MEETINGS ATTENDED

| | |
|---|---|
| August 30, 1974 | Northland Principals' Association, Grouard |
| November 1, 2 | The Minority Experience--A seminar sponsored by the Intercultural Education Council of the ATA, Edmonton |
| November 7, 8 | Northland Teachers Fall Institute, Edmonton |
| February 7 | Ad Hoc Committee on Cross Cultural Education, Department of Education |
| February 17 | Northland Principals' Association, Edmonton |

APPENDIX K

STUDIES UNDERTAKEN FOR THE STUDY GROUP

A Survey of Northland School Division Student Enrollments
Dr. J. A. Bacon, Department of Education

Community Profiles for Selected Northland Communities
Dr. E. W. Van Dyke, Applied Research Associates Ltd.

Language Policy and Indian Education
Dr. D. V. Parker, University of Alberta
(Commissioned by the Northern Development Group.)

An Analysis of Financial Procedures in Northland School Division
J. Clarke and A. Peddicord, Department of Education

APPENDIX L

TERMS OF OFFICE OF PRESENT TRUSTEES

| Trustee | Date of First Appointment | Expiry Date of Present Term |
|---|---|---|
| R. H. McKinnon | July 7, 1970 | July 7, 1976 |
| J. A. Ducharme | January 15, 1969 | January 14, 1978 |
| W. R. Weber | June 28, 1974 | June 4, 1975 |
| L. Willier | December 1, 1969 | December 1, 1975 |
| C. Yellowknee | December 22, 1970 | December 22, 1976 |
| A. Jacknife | November 1, 1972 | November 1, 1975 |
| M. Gaucher | January 1, 1973 | January 1, 1976 |